

Heritage Christian Community Baptist Church

Acts 10:17-33 Peter and Cornelius Meet

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In verses 1-16 of this chapter, we saw similar visions for Cornelius and Peter who were both visited by the Angel of God giving instructions concerning how the Gospel would be spread. God was both strategic and precise when giving instruction for an encounter between a Jewish Apostle, who had walked with Jesus, and a Gentile Roman Centurion, who worshipped and prayed to God. Although he was not a Jew, Cornelius kept the Jewish customs of prayer and fasted as he sought the Lord. Peter also kept the Jewish customs but was instructed in his vision to veer from Jewish traditions and accept what God wanted to do through him that had not been done before. Although Peter refused and would rebut God's instruction, God persisted and commanded Peter to go with those who were sent to take him to Cornelius. In this study, we will see the obedience of Peter to do the will of the Lord at the inception of conversion. His obedience changes reshapes Peter's insistently traditional heart and causes him to see God's will while following instructions. We will also see Cornelius' anticipation of God's Word set an expectation for those who are around him to see what he has heard. Expectation breeds preparation as the Gospel is spread instantaneously.

Messengers Summon Peter To Caesarea (Acts 10:17-23)

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. ¹⁸ And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

¹⁹ While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. ²⁰ Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

²¹ Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

²² And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." ²³ Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

When God gives us a vision or a mission, we don't always know all that it entails. Our understanding of Him is surface level until He reveals what we need to know. After a vivid vision and Peter hearing the voice of the Lord, Peter was perplexed about the meaning of the vision. He did not make haste to go about his day, but (v10) he thought about the vision for a while before moving on. In the same moment, the messengers of Cornelius stood outside Simon the Tanner's gate inquiring of Peter's dwelling. We should note Luke's previous mention of a voice from Heaven speaking to Peter (v13) is now highlighted as the Holy Spirit speaking to him. He first makes him aware that three men are looking for him. The Holy Spirit, in similar

fashion to the vision, speaks the sentiments of the voice in the vision. Previously stating “Rise, Peter; kill and eat,” the Holy Spirit now says, “Arise, go down and go with them.” The Holy Spirit assures Peter of His presence, comforting him so he does not remain perplexed and begin to doubt. What Peter does not realize is that the essence of the dream was already in play. His engagement with Gentiles had begun as he was about to converse with the messengers sent by Cornelius. Sometimes knowing all that God is doing will cause us to refuse to follow Him. Therefore, God walked Peter into obedience without disclosing what would cause him to stumble. The voice of the Holy Spirit brought peace and calmed Peter as He assured him that He sent the messengers.

Upon meeting the two servants and a soldier, Peter would have immediately recognized they were not Jewish. Peter realizes that God could use and send Gentiles just as He did Jews. The initial exchange with the messengers would alert Peter that his vision was about to be revealed. They advise Peter that an Angel of God had spoken to Cornelius to invite Peter to speak words from the Lord. In this, Peter saw the devoutness of Cornelius and the leading of God. This was an invitation to speak with a Gentile officer of the Roman army who desired to hear the Gospel from Peter. It was outside of the norm for Peter, but he would not refuse. Peter no longer followed Jewish customs as he allowed the Gentile messengers in as guests. Normally a Jew would have sent these Gentiles to an inn to lodge, but Peter concedes to God’s instruction and made the Gentiles to feel at home. The customs and traditions of Israel were suspended as Peter was obedient to fulfill God’s plan. This engagement and the mission ahead caused Peter to invite other Jews from Joppa to accompany him on the journey to meet Cornelius.

Q1: How should we respond when we have a dream or vision we do not immediately understand?

A: Open

Q2: How would you explain the timing of the arrival of Cornelius’ servants outside of Simon the Tanner’s gate?

A: Open

Q3: How did the Spirit tell Peter to respond to the visit?

A:

Q4: What was the connection between Peter’s vision and the messengers of Cornelius?

A:

Peter and Cornelius Meet (Acts 10:24-33)

²⁴ And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

³⁰ 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, ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. ³² 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.' ³³ 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."

As Peter came into Caesarea, he went to the home of Cornelius. There waiting for Peter were family and friends of the Roman Centurion. Four days have passed since Cornelius' vision (v30), and the hour is the same (3:00PM – the hour of prayer). Although time has elapsed, the weight of the vision remains with Cornelius as he is waiting with expectation. His faith in God would seize him and bring him to the expectation that God had something important for him related to his vision. As one who is familiar with worship, Cornelius takes the position of humility as the one in whom he has summoned arrives. Peter immediately explains that he is not the One to be worshipped because he is like Cornelius "...also a man" (v26). This is also to state their equality culturally as well. Peter's statement eliminates the Jewish and Gentile nationality prejudice. Peter's focus turns to the tradition of the Jews and teaches that it is unlawful to the custom of Jews for him to enter this domain. Nevertheless, his understanding of the mission is heightened by his own vision, and he knew that none of God's people should be called unclean. Peter was committed to fulfilling the vision and the servants request but still did not know the full meaning of his presence with Cornelius. He remained humble and asked with a servant's heart, "for what reason have you sent for me?"

Cornelius gives the synopsis of his encounter with God by leading with his fasting and praying regiment to God. This is to show that the effectual fervent prayer invites the heart of God to be present if we diligently seek Him. His desire for God was so intense that what he describes as "a man," which was the angel of God, showed up before him. Cornelius depicts the presence of God as a person standing with him giving specific instructions. He shares the details of his vision so that Peter can understand every step and interpret the vision or share what God was doing. This is what God told Cornelius Peter would do when he comes. For this, Cornelius brought family and friends to hear the revelation. Here, Peter discerns that God has called him there to spread the Gospel to all those Gentiles gathered with Cornelius.

Q5: Why did Peter tell Cornelius, "Stand up: I myself am also a man"?

A:

Q6: What does Cornelius remind us he was doing when he saw the Angel standing before him?

A:

Q7: How do you describe the instruction from the Man (Angel of God) given to Cornelius?

A: Open

Q8: When did Cornelius prepare to share the Gospel?

A:

Q9: What have you learned from this lesson?