

22T02 Cornelius

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me @ the PUNLA coffee table. So, get your coffee or tea and get comfortable so we can talk.

I want to discuss a story from the Acts of the Apostles. There is a very peculiar story about a Roman Centurion Cornelius and Peter in Acts 10:1 thru 11:18. This story is so amazing I think a closer look is overdue for most of us.

Let me read out of the NKJV, starting in Acts 10:1-8.

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" 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. Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Let me stop here of a minute. Cornelius was obviously a Roman from Rome most likely. Leader of a cohort or Centuria or 100 soldiers from Italy. He was stationed in Caesarea which was the essentially the Roman headquarters for the region including Israel. So, this was an important man but a gentile or no Jewish person. Cornelius was very generous and kind according to the bible. God sent him a vision or angel because He was already a devout man. Meaning He was trying to follow and honor God. So, God gave Cornelius what he was searching for in this vision. But please don't miss this. Cornelius is a Roman, yet he acknowledges the angel as lord or his superior. That's very humble. Let's keep reading in Acts 10:9-16.

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. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Let me stop here of a minute again. Peter is perplexed by what he has seen and heard. Earlier in Acts 9:32-43 Peter had traveled to Lydda and Joppa teaching and performing miracles. He was staying in Joppa with Simon the tanner. I heard a lot of people try to say this vision was about Kosher food and eating. But, when you read this hear God's message, "What God has cleanse or made clean you must not call common or unclean" Peter was confused about what was meant so, obviously it was not simply about food. Let's keep reading in Acts 10:17-23.

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. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." 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?" 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." Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Let me stop here of a minute again. Peter is perplexed by what he has seen and heard and at that very moment the men Cornelius had sent are at the gate. So, the vision has something to do with these men. Please remember Jews would not stay or eat with a Gentile. Jews would not touch a Gentile or anything a Gentile even touched. And Peter just says, come on in and stay here for the night. This is a big deal for Peter and Simon the tanner as well. Let's keep reading in Acts 10:23-36.

And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." 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. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

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."

Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—

Sorry but I have to stop here again. Peter just told a Roman Centurion Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Lord over Caesar, Lord of all. Peter should be killed for saying this. To a Roman Caesar is lord of all and to say anything different was to simply not allowed. The Centurion was required to punish this kind a statement severely and cruelly. Peter goes on in Acts 10:37-44.

that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but

to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

Sorry but I have to stop here again. Peter starts telling Cornelius about King Jesus and as he speaks the Holy Spirit comes to everyone hearing Peter speak. These are Gentiles. These are mostly likely all Romans. This had never happened before. Gentiles were being received by God in a mighty way. And the story continues in Acts 10:45-48.

And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

The guys with Peter, other Jews were shocked. Until now they believed Jesus was all about them as Jews. They had missed the “whole world” part of Jesus’ messages. Now Gentiles believed and received the Holy Spirit. And Peter goes how can I say no to this and baptized them in the name of the Lord. This is a big deal. Cornelius is committing treason to Roman by placing his allegiance to Jesus not Caesar. The Jews were shocked because well these are unclean gentiles; God is the God of Israel not these people. And if the story ended here, it would be amazing but it keeps going in Acts 11:1-18.

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”

Just remember those of the circumcision are Jews. Unflattering way to refer to them but Jews. The Uncircumcised are gentiles. And the Jews are angry Peter had the audacity to eat with them. You ate with those unclean barbarian gentiles. What were you thinking? So Peter answers in Ac? 1:6-18.

But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus

Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Can you imagine these guys with their mouths gaping? What did Peter just say, I'm sure a few mumbled. We were talking about eating with gentiles and now they know God is God of all. Being a Jew does not give you an exclusive part of Jesus. Jesus came for all of us. All of us folks. This is so important. This is the moment in history when the apostle finally got it. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is truly Lord of all. Not just for Jews but for every person everywhere in every generation. From this point on, you and I and all gentiles are part of the story of Christ. Amazing.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father. Thank you for

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We pay in your name Lord Jesus, Amen.

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