

Peter Meets Cornelius

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Scene Summary

Peter meets Cornelius tells the story of how Peter learns that the Gospel is for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. Scenes include: Cornelius speaking to his soldiers...giving alms to a beggar...having a vision when he prays...he sends for Peter...Peter prays on the rooftop...he sees a vision of a sheet of unclean animals...Cornelius' servant arrive...Peter agrees to go with them...Peter and some friends start the journey...Cornelius greets them...he tells of his vision...he invites Peter to speak to his relatives and friends...the people listen and many believe.

Scripture

(Acts 10 NIV) At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. {2} He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. {3} One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" {4} Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. {5} Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. {6} He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." {7} When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. {8} He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. {9} About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. {10} He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. {11} He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. {12} It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. {13} Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." {14} "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." {15} The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." {16} This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. {17} While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. {18} They called out,

asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. {19} While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. {20} So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." {21} Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" {22} The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." {23} Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. {24} The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. {25} As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. {26} But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." {27} Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. {28} He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. {29} So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?" {30} Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me {31} and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. {32} Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' {33} So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." {34} Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism {35} but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. {36} You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. {37} You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached-- {38} how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. {39} "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, {40} but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. {41} He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen--by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. {42} He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. {43} All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." {44} While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. {45} The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. {46} For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, {47} "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." {48} So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

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Players

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Cornelius** – A soldier and strong leader.
- **Angel** – A small, but important role.
- **Peter** – The main character in this story.
- **God** – Strong, offstage voice.
- **Servant** – A small role, sent from Cornelius to Peter.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.

Script – Peter meets Cornelius

Narrator: Cornelius was a centurion in the Roman army. He was the leader of many soldiers who were stationed in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was a good man. He often gave money to the poor people. He was kind and helpful. He tried very hard to please God. He prayed every day. But he did not know about God's son.

Narrator: [with feeling] One day, as Cornelius was praying, suddenly, he saw a vision of an angel and he was afraid.

Cornelius: [fearfully] What is it lord?

Angel: God has heard your prayers and seen your good deeds. Send now for Peter. He will tell you more about God.

Cornelius: [gets up from prayer and motions to his servant] I want you to go to Joppa. There you will go to the house of Simon the tanner, by the seaside. An angel told me that Peter is staying there. Ask him to come and see me.

[The servant hurries off. The scene changes to Simon's house.]

Narrator: The next day, in the afternoon, while Simon's wife prepared a meal, Peter sat on the rooftop praying. It was quiet, and Peter fell asleep. He had a very strange dream.

[Peter lays down, but looks concerned.]

Narrator: He saw a huge sheet, filled with all kinds of animals, reptiles and birds.

God's voice: Get up and eat Peter.

Peter: [still with eyes closed and lying down] Oh no Lord. I follow the Jewish laws and do not eat common food or unclean meat.

God's voice: Do not call anything unclean that God has cleansed.

[Peter slowly awakens]

Narrator: Peter awakened and remembered the dream. He had the same dream three times.

Peter: [to himself] What can this mean?

[There are voices in the background as Cornelius' servants arrive and knock at the gate.]

Narrator: Peter looked down and saw the men at the gate.

God's voice: Three men are looking for you Peter. Go with them, for I have sent them.

[Peter hurries to meet them]

Peter: I am Peter. Why have you come?

Servant: An angel told our master Cornelius to send for you. Cornelius is a good man and wants to follow God. All of the Jews speak well of him. Will you come with us?

Narrator: Early the next morning Peter and some of his friends started out with the three servants to go to Caesarea. Usually Jews did not enter into Gentile homes and did not eat with them. So far, Peter had only preached to Jews. Could his dream have something to do with Gentiles? They finally arrived at Cornelius' home.

Cornelius: [hurries to meet Peter and drops to his knees] I am so glad that you came.

Peter: [with a kind voice] Stand up Cornelius. I am a man like you.

Cornelius: Four days ago, when I was praying, an angel came and told me that my prayers were answered. He told me to send to Joppa, to invite you to come. So I sent my servants at once and you have been kind enough to come. I have invited my family and friends to come and meet you. So here we are, ready to hear all the Lord commanded you to tell us.

Peter: Truly I see that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, anyone who fears Him and who does what is right is acceptable to Him. You have heard about Jesus, who God sent to help us. Jesus was crucified, but God raised Him from the dead. Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

Narrator: The people listened and thought about what they had heard. That day, Cornelius and all those that heard the Gospel believed in Jesus as their Savior.

[Note: Need work here to convey the Acts 2 experience of the Holy Spirit]

The End

Supplemental Information

Back in Old Testament days, soon after the Hebrews left the land of Egypt, God gave them many health rules. Some of the rules concerned food.

Chapter eleven of Leviticus lists many animals that the Hebrews could eat and some that they could not eat. Perhaps you would like to read this chapter.

The people could eat cows and certain other animals, all kinds of fish which had scales and fins, and many kinds of birds. Among the animals that the people could not eat were pigs, eels, lobsters, pelicans, seagulls, and owls.

Today we know that pork spoils very quickly and that eating spoiled pork can cause death. Pork that is not well cooked may cause sickness. The Hebrews had no refrigeration, and their cooking methods were primitive. God asked the people not to eat pork and certain other foods because he wanted them to stay well.

Today we eat pork and many other foods God told the Hebrews not to eat. We have many ways to keep the meat from spoiling, and we have better cooking methods than the Hebrews had.

Reflection questions

- Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army. He commanded a band of 100 men. At the time the Romans ruled Palestine, and they kept the soldiers in many cities in the country. Cornelius wasn't a rich man. Why do you think he gave money to the poor?
- In Bible days, God gave messages to people in dreams or visions. What message did the angel bring to Cornelius?
- Cornelius decided to send his servants to ask Peter to come and visit. Why did Cornelius want Peter to come to his house?
- People often sat on the flat rooftops of their homes in Palestine. The women sometimes did their work up on the roof. And sometimes the family slept on the roof so they would enjoy the cool breeze. It was a good place to go and think. One day at Simon's house Peter fell asleep while he was praying. Peter had an unusual dream. Do you remember what it was?
- Peter thought it must be a very important dream because he dreamed it three times. He wondered what it meant. Do you know what God wanted Peter to learn from the dream?
- Peter heard a knock at the gate. Who did you think was there? What did God tell Peter to do?
- The men told Peter why they had come. Peter was surprised that God wanted him to preach to Romans, or Gentiles. He had preached only to the Jews. Many Jews thought that God sent messages only to Jews. They didn't preach to others. It was a long walk to Caesarea where Cornelius lived. Peter had time to think about his strange dream and he thought about Cornelius who was not a Jew. Cornelius was glad that Peter had come.

Why do you think he got on his knees before Peter? Do you think he thought Peter was a very important man? Why?

- Cornelius began to talk to Peter. What did he tell him?
- Cornelius led Peter into another room. What do you think Peter thought about when he saw so many Romans waiting to hear him talk about God and His Son, Jesus?
- Now Peter knew what his dream meant. God wanted Peter to know that all people are important – not only the Jews. God showed Peter that He loves everyone and He wants everyone to love and obey Him. Peter told the people about God and His Son Jesus. When he told them that God could forgive their wrongdoings, what did the people think? What do you think you should do about the wrong things you do?