



October 1, 2017

AM Passage-Acts 10; PM-No Worship

Acts 10 NIV

10 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 and birds. **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^[a] 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 ask you to 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 believers 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 While 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 or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone 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: “Three 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 from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of 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 cross, 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 Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues^[b] and praising God.

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “Surely no one can stand in the way of their 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.

Discussion Questions

1. What evidences are there in Scripture that God never calls someone without simultaneously preparing the audience or person to whom we are being sent? What assurance should this give us when we feel prompted by the Holy Spirit to talk to someone about Christ?
2. Will there be some persons in heaven who never knew about Jesus, but who, like Cornelius, lived up to the light that they had? Why, then, does Scripture give us this story about Cornelius, the angel, and Peter, if the answer to the first part of this question is yes? How important are human agents in the spreading of the gospel message?
3. How does God work to overcome the cultural and theological “hang-ups” that his messengers sometimes have? Did Peter believe that the gospel was for all races (cf. Acts 2)? Then why did he need to have a sheet let down from heaven? Is it true that our beliefs sometimes outstrip our actions? Name some areas. Where in the New Testament did the distinction between clean and unclean cease?
4. Does God hear the prayer of someone who doesn’t know him as yet, but is only seeking him? What is the role of prayer in this situation?
5. Given the fast pace of our culture, is it any wonder that we are experiencing more difficulty than former days did in knowing the will of the Lord for our lives? Put this statement together with the role that prayer plays in receiving the call of God.
6. Why is it correct to affirm that “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22)? Give the Old Testament evidence for this truth.

7. What was it about this third “Pentecost” that startled the small delegation that went up the coast from Joppa to Caesarea with Peter? What area will this fact impact the most, when we think about the results that revival should have in our day?

Conclusion

This biblical record of the first Gentile revival makes it plain that, when God renews and revives his church, a new urgency is felt to get the gospel out to every man, woman, and child on the face of the planet. Peter and that small delegation from Joppa must have reflected many a time on what had happened that day in Caesarea.

Just over two centuries of modern missions have passed since the call of William Carey. We have seen an enormous number of people drawn to the Savior through the faithful proclamation of the Word of God. But the most effective moments in the worldwide mission of the church have come on the heels of special times when God has revived his church.

When the lips of the church have been cleansed, just as the prophet Isaiah’s were as he caught an overwhelming vision of the greatness of God one day during his worship in the temple, then we too will be able to hear the call of God to be his witnesses around the earth. He waits for a church that has slackened in her response to this missionary mandate to say to her Lord, “Here am I, send me.”

After World War II, a veritable army of men and women returned from the former battlefields of the globe to take up the challenge to go as ambassadors for Christ wherever he would have them go. The days have passed and much has been accomplished, but that army of workers has now retired, and some have gone on to glory. As a result, the net number of workers continues to dwindle, to the shame of the present church.

And what shall we say of the rest of Christ’s church? Should not all of his people evidence that same indwelling boldness and power of the resident Holy Spirit by carrying a witness into every sphere and walk of life? Instead, we seem to be more intimidated by the world than we are involved in shaking up the world. Those early disciples turned their world upside down for the sake of the gospel (Acts 17:6), even though they were just as ordinary as we are. The difference lay in the fact that they submitted themselves to the work of God’s Holy Spirit. Hence it was not by might, nor by power, but by God’s Spirit (Zech. 4:6) that they fulfilled the great missionary mandate that our Lord gave to his own.

If it takes another sheet dropped down from heaven to jolt us out of our preconceptions and prejudices about many aspects of sharing the gospel, then let us pray that God will use whatever methods are needed to awaken us to his call in our day.

