

## The Book Of Acts: Verse-by-Verse

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### Study Notes: Acts 10:3-8

The single greatest (first) expansion of the Gospel to the Gentiles: Cornelius and his friends.

- **Cornelius' Vision: vv. 3-6:**

"One day at about three in the afternoon he [Cornelius] had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" 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. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

- **Three O'clock In The Afternoon: v. 3**

Why is Luke so specific about the hour? Older Bible translations: "about the ninth hour". This was the designated time for afternoon prayers. See: Exodus 29:39, 41; 1 Kings 18:29; Psalm 5:11 and Daniel 6:10.

- **Double Visions: v. 3**

Four times in the Book of Acts we find believers being led by visions. Twice, we have an episode where there are double visions.

- Ananias and Saul: Acts 9:10, Acts 9:12
- Cornelius and Peter: Acts 10:3, Acts 10:17
- Paul and the Macedonians: Acts 16:9–10
- Paul and the Corinthian Campaign: Acts 18:9

Cornelius is going to have a vision of Peter coming to tell him about Christ. Meanwhile, Peter is going to have a vision about going to Cornelius' home.

**A Distinct Vision:** "... Cornelius had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

"Horama"- "to see". Literally means that which is seen, as opposed to a figment of one's imagination. (See: Matthew 17:9; Acts 7:31; 10:3, 17, 19; 18:9).

Cornelius saw an angel of God - “an” angel, as opposed to “The Angel of the Lord”. After Christ’s Incarnation and Resurrection, theophanies no longer play a role in Gospel history. From that point onward, all appearances of Christ are post-resurrection appearances.

Angels in the Book of Acts: 21 references – second only to Revelation, which has 77 references. (See: Acts 5:19; Acts 6:15; Acts 7:30; Acts 7:35; Acts 7:38; Acts 7:53; Acts 8:26; Acts 10:3; Acts 10:7; Acts 10:22; Acts 11:13; Acts 12:7; Acts 12:8; Acts 12:9; Acts 12:10; Acts 12:11; Acts 12:15; Acts 12:23; Acts 23:8; Acts 23:9; Acts 27:23).

Cornelius “distinctly saw” an angel: Greek word for “distinctly” or “clearly”: “phanerós” – “apparent” or “manifest”. Two uses: 1. Something that is plain, or distinct – in contrast to what is indistinct. 2. Something that is public, as opposed to hidden or private. See also: Mark 1:45; John 7:10.

- **Staring In Fear: v. 4**

Cornelius was a battle-hardened Centurion. He has endured the most difficult military training of his era. He has endured long marches, grueling battles, extreme conditions – and the like. And yet, he is staring at this angel in fear.

- “What is it, Lord?”: v. 4

While “Kurios” (Lord) can be used of God or Christ, in this context it really means, “Sir”. (See: Matthew 27:63; John 12:21; Acts 16:30).

- **Prayers and Gifts:**

“Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.”

The angel’s response is heavily weighted with terms from the Levitical directions for sacrifices and offerings. Back in verse 2 Luke told us, “Cornelius and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.”

When Luke says that Cornelius prayed regularly, he had a choice of two verbs, “proseuchomai” – which is weighted towards the idea of worship, and “deomai”, which reflects the ideas of petition, pleading, or intensity. Luke used, “deomai”. He’s telling us that Cornelius’ prayers were intense. See, also: Luke 5:12; Luke 9:38

Cornelius’ prayers and gifts to the poor had come up as a memorial offering before God. This echoes the Old Testament “meal offering” –

a handful of flour with oil, and incense. The Levitical priests burned this compound on the altar of incense.

Pre-Leviticus picture: Genesis 8:20-22.

- **“Send men to Joppa”:** vv. 5-6

“Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

Notice how specific the angel’s instructions are.

- A specific city: Joppa
- A specific man: Peter
- A specific host: Simon the Tanner
- A specific location: House by the Sea

- **A Watershed Moment: Cornelius and the Gentiles**

A “God-fearer’s” prayers and benevolence had ascended like a sweet-smelling offering to God – and God was about to honor Cornelius’ faith by showing him the rest of the road to salvation.

Two principles at work: God’s Sovereignty and Human Choice: God’s intentions to thrust the Church into His preplanned Gospel expansion. was met in Cornelius’ heartfelt search for salvation.

Cornelius was living up to the light that he had: He took a step by becoming a Jewish “God-fearer”. It was short of what Cornelius was seeking; but it was a step in the right direction.

John 1:9-12 says, “The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.”

- **The Barriers In Cornelius’ Case:**

1. For over three years, The Church had been primarily focused on reaching Jerusalem Jews.
2. The wholesale salvation of the Gentiles wasn’t in the Church’s periphery.
3. The future “apostle to the Gentiles” wasn’t prepared yet.

- **Sending For Peter: vv. 7-8:**

“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. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.”

As soon as the angel had given Cornelius his instructions, he left. Hebrews 1:14: “All the angels are spirits who serve God and are sent to help those who will receive salvation.”

In the Book of Acts the work of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the ministry of angels. Throughout the Bible, angels are involved in many different tasks, including:

- Bringing answer to prayers.
- Encouraging believers.
- Providing protection.
- Delivering God's instructions.
- Explaining prophetic messages.

Cornelius wasted no time in obeying the instructions to send me to Joppa to get Peter. The distance between Caesarea Maritima and Joppa was about 32 miles, following the Mediterranean coastline south. It would take the men several days, depending on whether they walked or rode horses.

The angel certainly could have given Cornelius the pertinent facts about Christ and salvation. He didn't. That task has not fallen to angels – it's been given to humans.

The angel's message and Cornelius' obedience both worked to set the stage for the Gospel to finally find its first foray into Gentile territory.

However, before that could happen, God was going to need to do something in Simon's Peter's life: As one scholar put it, “The principal subject of this chapter is not so much the conversion of Cornelius as the conversion of Peter.”

**That's what we will see next time.**