

Acts 10

The Good News to the Gentiles – a 7 scene drama.

1 Scene s. v1-8 Cornelius's Vision
Cornelius – a gentile, a Roman army officer commanding 100 men – devout, God-fearing. He gave alms and prayed to God. He is an outsider but on the fringes of the Christian community who is willing to learn about Christ. He has a vision and becomes a passive participant in God's work.

Cornelius becomes the first gentile convert. An angel appears with a message. Apparently Cornelius doesn't question the heavenly messenger; he just sends his trusted men as God told him to do. He doesn't appear to be told why he is to send for Peter.

Scene 2 vs. 9-16 Peter's Vision - The word for "trance" is the same one used in Genesis for Adam's sleep and for Abram when God makes a covenant with him. A trance like state allows God to communicate with a

chosen one for a divine purpose. The sheet contains animals for eating. Both Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the

Old Testament forbid the eating of ritually unclean animals – that is what the sheet contained. God

commands Peter to eat three times – thereby emphasizing the importance of what is occurring. Peter

pushes back, holding on to his faith. To a faithful Jew these laws were an issue of life and death. Eventually he is convinced yet puzzled.

Scene 3 vs. 17-23a Cornelius's men arrive and the Spirit directs him to meet these emissaries. He listens to

what they say and offers hospitality to the strangers – signaling his willingness to go with them. It is possible

Peter questioned the men from Cornelius but essentially he just goes with them without exactly knowing why.

Scene 4 23b -33 Peter and Cornelius meet and Cornelius explains his vision to Peter. After listening to him

Peter begins to speak. For this plan of God's to work both Peter and Cornelius must change. Peter confesses that he has broken Jewish law because God has told him it was OK. God rearranged Peter's idea of clean and unclean.

Both house and hospitality are mentioned frequently – because contact between Jew and gentile create household and table time problems. As Peter and Cornelius talk old divisions are broken down and Peter now sits comfortably in a house that had been off limits.

Scene 510:34-43 Peter's Sermon

Peter opens with the stunning revelation that he now knows that God shows no partiality. That statement is a complete upending of the basis for the faithful life of the Jews. Peter follows the speech formula that we have seen in earlier speeches – proclamation, scriptural proof, and summons to repentance. God does not play

favorites. Yet the Jews have based their faith on the assumption that God is in fact partial – to them.

The issue is not in reality about “unclean” food. Rather it is about “unclean” who are to sit at our table too.

And it is about our inability to know who or what is unclean. To say that Jesus is Lord is to affirm his lordship over all creation – not just part of creation. Any nation who worships him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Peter finds it difficult to present specific scripture to support his affirmation and so has put his neck out – he is on risky ground without scripture and tradition to back him up. Often faith comes down to our trying to keep up with the redemptive activity of God – to keep asking ourselves-“what is God doing?”

Scene 6 vs. 44-48 The Spirit descends

Any questions or doubts the people hearing Peter may have had are eliminated when the Spirit descends

upon Cornelius and his kin. As Peter says –“who could forbid baptism when the Spirit has already come upon the people?”

**Scene 7 11:1-8 Peter Has Some Explaining to Do
(stay tuned)**