

Acts 9:36-43

“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. 43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.”

*Introduction: Connecting The Dots From Lydda To Joppa
To Caesarea*

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“We had come as far, I believe, chapter 9 as far as verse 36, we’ll back up to verse 32 where we have finished at this point for a while at least with Paul the apostle, going back to Tarsus. The Church is at rest, again, verse 32 if you remember Peter it says **“it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.” (verse 32)** Again, Peter, realizing his responsibility, travelling, visiting these young churches, and not driven out of Jerusalem now by persecution, the Church is at peace, it’s at rest, it’s growing, and Peter visiting these fledgling congregations as he begins to assume some of his responsibility as

an overseer. He travels about 23 miles from Jerusalem down to Lydda. And again there he finds a man who has been bedridden for 8 years, paralytic, he's paralyzed, and in the process Peter, looking at him, says "**Jesus Christ maketh thee whole:**", **verse 34**, in the present tense, *'now, you are being healed, right now,'* not by Peter, he says *'right now Jesus Christ is making you whole, is in the process of making you whole,'* "**arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.**" (**verse 34b**) and notice, "**And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron [and in the plains of Sharon] saw him, and turned to the Lord.**" (**verse 35**) So there was a great stirring, this setting the stage then for Peter to end up at Joppa. Word will spread through the whole area of this man that was healed in Lydda. Ten miles further on the same road takes you to the city of Joppa, there was about a 3,000 year history at least, Joppa of course is where Jonah, when he was supposed to go to Nineveh, fled to escape, not wanting to be merciful to the Ninevites who he hated, because of how ruthless they were [the ancient Assyrians, whom the modern day Germans can trace their roots]. Joppa, this scene here, one of the ports of Israel, Hiram the king of Lebanon [king of the Phoenicians] brought in those cedars and cypresses to build the Temple for Solomon, through the port of Joppa, it was the main port for centuries. Here in this scene, of course, where we see this woman, Dorcas, raised from the dead there, and then Peter staying at the house of one Simon the tanner at Joppa. Lydda was burned in 65 AD, and then Joppa destroyed in 68AD by the Romans, and 8,000 Jews were slaughtered there by the Romans. Eventually, Joppa taken over by the Muslims, and then Richard the Lionhearted forged his way into this part of the world and took Joppa and built a citadel there, and it held out for a hundred years or so, until the brother of Saladin overcame the Christians that were there and slaughtered 20,000 Christians at Joppa, and it fell again when Napoleon came into that part of the world and took Joppa and then just leveled this city. It was rebuilt again under the Ottoman empire, and in 1948 when many Jews came back to Israel, it was the port that many of them came back to the Promised Land through. So Joppa there today, beautiful it is, we just went to Israel, so it, certainly it's 150 foot in elevation above the sea, there it's on a hill right on the coast, and a beautiful location. But it was 10 miles past Lydda to Joppa.

Who Is Tabitha?

And as Peter is there in Lydda, it says **“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha,”** now that is her Hebrew or Aramaic name, and when Peter tells her to get up, he’s going to say **“Tabitha, arise,”** her name is Tabitha, and it says, **“which by interpretation is called Dorcas:”** now if I was her I just wouldn’t interpret it, I think Tabitha is much prettier, ah, both names Dorcas the Greek, Tabitha the Hebrew, both names mean “Gazelle,” speak of a gracious animal. And it says **“this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” (verse 36)** not some, she was full of good works, “and almsdeeds” things she did for the less fortunate, and the key there, “which she did.” Many of us are full of good works and full of intentions, and the things never get accomplished. Wonderfully this woman is full of good works and almsdeeds **which she did**, she put hands and feet to them. Her outreach into her community in the name of Christ seemed to be through the power of a sewing needle, she was much like Mary of Bethany, who poured out that alabaster ointment, the ointment from the alabaster cruise, Jesus said **‘Let her alone, she has done what she could.’** And Tabitha, Dorcas was a woman like that, she looked around, and she wasn’t going to do miracles, she wasn’t going to teach Bible studies, but she did what she could, she took up for the less fortunate. And we see in Joppa there were many widows, because of the sea, it was Israel’s port, and there were many husbands and many a father that left from there, and many a wife would wait, many a child waited for a father that never came home because they were lost at sea. And she would know them, and she would take up for them, she would provide for them, and she would work to provide again, clothing for them. And again, this was a culture where sometimes you had one garment, there were a lot with jewels and with gold, and with silk, and the poor Jew might just be buried in a common gown. And Gamaliel in his school in Jerusalem, you remember the Sanhedrin, said that it wasn’t right, that we all come into the world, we all leave the same way, and it was in his day that a decree was made that every Jew, rich or poor, should be buried the same way, and that would be they’d lay them on a piece linen, and that piece of linen would be pulled over the head, back down to the feet again, the feet would be tied together, the knees, the hands would be tied to the side, the mouth would be tied shut [that’s when some of us learn to keep our mouths shut], the *tacroheme* [spelled phonetically, have no idea how to spell it]. So this woman, no doubt, was bathed and taken into the upper room and

wrapped with this *tacroheme*, and it insinuates she was a woman of some means, if she had an upper room to be laid in, she had probably watched widows gathering driftwood from the beach from this upper room, she had probably prayed in this upper room, and now she falls sick. She could have died a year earlier, she could have died a year later, probably the church, we're going to find them weeping, *'Why this woman, Lord you could have taken me, I never did anything like this woman, this woman blessed the church, she served the church, this woman did so many good things.'* But she's going to be, as we connect the dots, she's the link to get Peter, there had to be somebody this beloved, to get Peter then to come from Lydda to Joppa, to the house of Simon the tanner where he's going to see the sheet let down from heaven, which will make a connection to the house of Cornelius, which will open the Gospel to the Gentile world and infect the earth for the next 2,000 years. So, it's an interesting sequence of events that takes place here, remarkably. And **"they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa,"** now 10 miles away, no doubt they had heard of the miracle of Aeneas being healed, and notice **"and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him"** that word means "imploring him, begging him," **that he would not delay to come to them." (verses 37b-38)** It speaks certainly of their love for Tabitha, it speaks of their urgency, hoping even against hope that this miraculous ministry that took place in the life of Aeneas might take place in the life of this woman also, so they beg him, they implore him, they tell him not to be offended but to come. And **"Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber:"** and notice this, it says **"and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." (verse 39)** And they all stood there "weeping," this is our word "convulsing." Now the interesting thing about this scene, this is very genuine. Peter had gone to the house of Jairus, there they had hired professional mourners who were making an ado, crying, carrying on, Jesus got there, and Jesus said *'Why make you such an ado, the maid is not dead, but she's sleeping,'* and it said *'they laughed him to scorn,'* they immediately changed gears from wailing and crying to laughing, because they were professional mourners. In this scene, these are not professional, these are genuinely heartbroken women, crying out and pointing out to Peter the good works this woman did, they were brokenhearted, many of them had no one to care for them, and this

woman had cared for them, befriended them. As they come, they're standing by, the word is convulsing, sobbing, weeping out loud, **“and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.” (verse 39b)** she had affected the entire community, just in the simple work of her hands. Again, sometimes I think we undervalue what it means to make a meal and take it to someone, either that or sometimes what it means to get to the hospital and visit someone. I think we forget sometimes when somebody loses a loved one, there's the business of the funeral, the funeral arrangements, and the grief of those days. But somehow that person whose feeling very alone, a month later, when everyone else has moved on or two months later, a phone call is so appreciated. Sometimes we can not realize what an act of kindness, we have kids in Sunday school without dads, and sometimes if you see one, it means the world for you to say *'Hey, little kids, How you doing? I've been thinking of you, praying for you.'* That may change a life. Or vice versa, a little girl without a mom. A simple act of kindness that's done in the name of Christ, a cold cup of water we hear Jesus speak of, can change so much. And we look here, this woman had touched the whole community with a needle and thread. And no doubt there was a lot of compassion attached to that. They're weeping, they're showing Peter everything, **“But Peter then put them all forth,”** now he had been with Jesus when Jesus did that, put out those that were laughing and mocking, and notice, **“and kneeled down, and prayed;”** ah, I appreciate that so much, you know, we pray in different positions, I pray in the car, I pray in traffic, I was praying on the way over here tonight *'Lord, get this guy out from in front of me,'* now just your eyes are not closed, you'd better not do that while you drive, because everybody else is doing it for some reason. You know, you pray at the table sitting, there's times Cathy and I may pray sitting somewhere. But there are times when the only appropriate thing to do is fall to your knees, and be to in that broken place, where you've been to the place where God has done something that has so astounded you, and so filled you with wonder with his awe and his power, that you can only fall to your knees, I've been there many times. And I look at Peter here. You see this would be the greatest miracle to date, in Peter's ministry. He's seen the man at the Gate Beautiful healed, there are miracles that have taken place, but this is going to be a resurrection. He puts the people forth, and he falls to his knees, and I'm not sure what he's praying, *'Lord, I was minding my own business, mending my nets and you said 'Follow me, I'll make you fishers of men.'* I had

never intended to get here, I'd much rather be here at Joppa teaching them how to mend their nets and fix their boats than with this dead body, Lord, you need to be with me, I'm just fisherman, I never went to seminary, I need your help here,' whatever it might be. And he brought his heart before the throne of God, there's no doubt there, **"and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise."** "to the body," she wasn't there, to the body. Now look, there's people in the Church that teach soul-sleep, there's no such thing as soul-sleep, ah, sometimes out of the old Pentecostal churches, years ago out of the Azusa Street ministry there were churches that taught when someone dies, that their soul sleeps in the body until the resurrection. The Scripture knows nothing of that, we remember in Elijah when he is there with the widow and her little son dies, it says he went three times and lay on top of that body and prayed, and it says the third time **'his soul came into him again.'** Paul says **'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, I would much rather depart and be with the Lord.'** In Revelation chapter 6 we see the souls of those who were beheaded, the martyrs for the cause of Christ under the altar in heaven saying *'How long O Lord, before you avenge our deaths on those on the earth'* and so forth. So the Bible knows nothing of soul-sleep, Peter looks to the body, her soul [spirit in man] at this point is in the presence of the Lord [and in that presence this spirit in man, soul as he calls it, could either be sleeping up there awaiting the resurrection or it could be awake. This point is a gray area of interpretation where many parts of the Body of Christ disagree. To see some explanations about this gray area of doctrinal interpretation, see <https://unityinchrist.com/plaintruth/battle.htm>]. He looked to the body, it says, and then he says **"Tabitha, arise."** This is like *Tabitha cumi*, the Lord had said to the little girl, *Talitha cumi*, little lamb arise, he's saying **'gazelle arise.'** And look at this, **"And she opened her eyes:"** I wonder what she saw? She opened her eyes, and she looked around, **"and when she saw Peter, she sat up."** **(verse 40)** she thought *'Here I am with a strange guy, wrapped in this white towel, how'd I get here? what's going on?'* and she sits up, and Peter it says, then took her by the hand, what a gentleman, he reaches out to her to help her up. This still goes on in places, K.P. Yohanan, Gospel for Asia, last year, told us of several that were raised from the dead, one man had been dead 10 days, that was raised from the dead. It happens, certainly in the mission field in different circumstances. It is the exception, it is not the rule.

Sometimes we wonder why we don't see more of the miraculous. But God does, when it suits his purposes, he still works, he still raises people from the dead. Look around the room, he raised us all from the dead, didn't he? [i.e. the spiritually dead] and he raised us from the dead. She opened her eyes, she saw Peter, he gave her his hand, she didn't say *'Let me alone, don't touch me! I was in heaven, you prayed and brought me back! Can't you be satisfied, I was in glory, now I'm back here! I can't believe I'm back here.'* **“And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.”** (verses 41-42) because they all loved this woman, all loved her.

Peter's Stay With Simon The Tanner

“And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.” (verse 43) Now there's an interesting process taking place where he is crossing boundaries of [Jewish] prejudice, a step at a time. He has come to Joppa, I wonder if he's thinking about, of course, Jonah, another Jew [or an Israelite, who might have been a Manassite or Ephraimite, and not a Jew per se] that was sent to the Gentile world, that's going to happen to him in the next chapter. I wonder what he's thinking about Jonah, what he's thinking of in these days as he's there in Joppa. He is staying with one Simon a tanner. Now, the Talmud has much to say about the tanner. If you read in history about the tanner, the tanner was considered unclean, because he worked with dead animals all the time, to skin them, and the hide was cured with salt water, sometimes with dog excrement, ah, the house of the tanner was a home that had a terrible smell, they were not allowed within the city walls, they had to be at least 50 paces downwind from the prevailing wind in any city. If your daughter married a man, and when she married him found out he was a tanner, she had legal grounds for divorce. If a Levite married, if your husband died and you didn't have children, and your husband's brother decided to marry you and raise up children, if he was a tanner you didn't have to marry him the Talmud said. The tanner was a man who was “unclean” in many ways, and here's Peter staying now in the house. There are still tanners in that area, and copper smiths today, south of Joppa.”

Acts 10:1-24

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, 2 a devout *men*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3 He saw a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 and when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house top to pray about the sixth hour: 10 and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to earth: 12 wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, No so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice *spake* unto him the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate, 18 and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21 Then

Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and called together his kinsmen and near friends.”

Just Who Is Cornelius?

“When these men will come from Cornelius to look for him, all they need to do is smell their way there, it’s not a difficult house to find, I’m sure. And as Peter is there, in the house of Simon the tanner, no doubt he sees wineskins hanging there, and he remembers the Lord saying ***‘You can’t put new wine into old skins, the skins will burst and you lose the wine and skins. But new wine has to be put into new skins.’*** Something new is going to happen, he’s going to be called to the house of a Gentile from this place. [Comment: Something new had already occurred, the Church in the Wilderness, which had become the Temple worship under the old establishment of the Levitical priesthood and Temple sacrificial system had just been replaced by the Church of God in Jerusalem and the churches of God that were spreading northward, and would eventually spread to the whole Mediterranean world, eclipsing the old system of Judaism and Temple worship. Cornelius is an important, but just a small part of that new wineskin which the Lord is busy using Peter and then the apostle Paul to create and fill up with new wine. To see how Peter and Paul did this, see <https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>] And how wonderfully God has set the stage. And he’s there at the house of this Simon the tanner, it says ***‘for many days’*** we’re not told exactly how long that “many days” was, but he’s there. It says now **“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”** (verses 1-2) *The Italian band,*

was “the Italian cohort,” we’re introduced now to this man Cornelius. He is in Caesarea, Caesarea is 30 miles north of Joppa. And that’s nothing for us to say that, but remember as Peter’s travelling, that’s a 30-mile hike. It’s 30 miles north of Joppa, and Caesarea was built by Herod the Great, who had built the Herodian, built Masada, who had built the Temple, reinforced Jerusalem, he was a master builder. And those of you who have been there have seen the amphitheater there on the beach, that seats 4,000 people, with the Mediterranean as a backdrop, it’s a beautiful amphitheater, and the hippodrome there seated 30,000 people. It was 256 acres within a perimeter wall, the city of Caesarea, which is a remarkable city for the day. And I think of Jericho where the walls fell down was only 8 to 10 acres inside. So you figure this, our whole property here is 13 acres, figure 256 acres inside of a perimeter wall, this is a formidable city. It was the Roman headquarters in Judea, it stood in contrast to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the Jewish capital, it was where the Jews despised the Romans, they despised Caesarea, it was where Pontius Pilate, the prefect and the praetorians would spend their time there, and then they would go on duty to Jerusalem, but it was where the prefect’s palace was there, and so forth, and it was a beautiful city. The excavations prove that there is as much work underground in Caesarea as there is above ground, there was a whole sewage and drainage system, and it was made to function in a particular way, and they anticipated high tides, so they built it so that whenever there were high tides, it would completely flush the whole sewage system and clean it out completely. [I bet there was a huge plankton bloom existent in the Mediterranean Sea adjacent to Caesarea, which actually would have contributed to the fish population, interestingly enough.] They built a breakwater almost a quarter mile out into the Mediterranean of hydraulic cement, Herod had divers diving with underwater cement that cured underwater, they built an amazing breakwater there and a port there. There were temples to at least seven of the pagan gods of the Roman pantheon, and there was a huge temple right down by the port, built to Caesar, to Augustus, so the name of the city was Caesarea, dedicated to the emperor in that day, it was a remarkable city. In that city there was an Italian Cohort, ah, a Legion in those days, a Roman Legion, which was overseen by a general, had 6,000 men, which was probably part of the 10th Roman Legion. A cohort had 600 men, but an Italian cohort had an auxiliary, it had 1,000 men. This is the earliest record in the world of an Italian Cohort in Caesarea, the archaeologist’s spade confirmed that as time went on.

But this is the first record. An Italian cohort, at least 600 men with auxiliary was considered most faithful to the emperor and to Rome, it was all Italians or Romans from Rome, and they were noted for holding their position on the battlefield. Other troops may flee when the enemy came [but they didn't], they weren't noted for being ruthless or piercing through enemy lines, but they would not budge an inch to the point of their lives, because they were loyal to Rome and to Caesar. So this was an Italian band, an Italian cohort, ah, there were 32 of them, Roman history tells us, Roman bands spread out through the Roman empire. One of them is placed here at Caesarea, and the cohort of 600 men plus auxiliary was divided into 6 centuries, a century had a 100 men. The Tribune was over the cohort, and the centurion was over the century, or the 100 men. And here in this city was this man name Cornelius who is over 100 men, he was a centurion, and he had to be a man that was favoured to be part of this Roman cohort, purely Roman cohort, and the 100 men that he oversaw, he would go on the front line of battle, often with the Tribune, and watch the cohort or the entire Legion and not get themselves so much into the battle, the centurion was the man known to be the man on the front with his sword out, with his shield, fighting side by side with his men. The centurion was the man who inspected his 100 men every day, he trained them, he looked at their weaponry, their shields, their swords, he even inspected how much food they carried, he was responsible for them. [A Centurion is equivalent to a Company commander, like Dick Winters of Easy Company in *Band of Brothers*.] And there is this man we meet now at Caesarea named Cornelius. Now, the centurion received, base pay for a centurion was 16 times that of any enlisted man, 16 times more, that's base pay, many of them made more than that. So a centurion, it says here, he had servants that continually waited on him, a soldier, he probably lived in a different social strata than the rest of his soldiers, the men that were under him, he had connections in the government, he was fairly wealthy in that they were paid much more. And it tells us here in verse 2 that **“he was a devout man, him and his family,” “that he gave much alms to the people,”** it's not anthropize, it's not just to any misfortunate people there, it's to the *layos*, to the Jews, in particular it seems that it's speaking of, that he gave much alms to the Jews, and that “he prayed continually” it tells us in verse 2, that he prayed to God always. Now look, this was a man, no doubt, who had watched the bloodshed on the battlefield, that was with sword and shield and spear. He had seen the pillaging and the evil, often, demonstrated

after victory in battle. He had seen the hollowness of Rome, and Rome is disintegrating by this time [but it would linger on for another 450 years], Rome several hundred years before this was a Republic, had some great standards, but Rome is now disintegrating, and within a hundred years there will be appointed a man to go back and look at Rome's republic to decide why their military was so great. Rome at this point has become hollow, it's powerful but it's hollow [much like the United States and our military today]. This morning I read from Alfred Edersheim an excerpt where he describes Rome as a place where there was no longer any conscience, there was no longer absolute right and wrong, might was right. And in Rome at this point in time everything was being corrupted. It says that women were so immoral in Rome at this point in time that marriages were disintegrating and marriage was almost unknown in Rome itself at this point in time, that abortion and the slaughter and killing of newly born children was not only tolerated, it was accepted, the Senate was passing legislation in favour of homosexuality. You study what was happening in Rome at this point in time was hollow, it was disintegrating, morally it was falling apart. And this man saw the folly of all that, no doubt he saw the folly of the Roman pantheon, with all of the gods, they were not producing anything. And somehow stationed here in Judea, he looked at the Jew. And he must have thought the Jew, and like Mark Twain wrote about the Jew, was indestructible, this guy must have looked, they were under Egypt, Egypt's gone and they're still here. They were under the Assyrians, the Assyrians are gone, they're still here. They were under the Babylonians, the Babylonians are gone, they're still here. They were under the Greeks, the Greeks are gone, they're still here, *'and now they're under us, and each Jewish man knows it's wrong to be in adultery, they teach their children, they cling to one God, not a pantheon, they have an ethic, they have a moral,'* it wasn't perfect, but he saw something, as many pagans did in that culture, that was attractive, about the idea of one God, monotheism, and he was drawn to that. Now he's not complete, he's a good man, he's devout, he's very religious, not only is he religious, it says his whole household was. Sometimes we look at the Church today and think *'How poorly fathers are doing their job, spiritually, as high priest of the home, making sure there's a spiritual influence and no compromise in the home.'* This is a man without the New Testament, was not born-again at this point in time, without the light that we have, and yet this is a man that determined that his wife and his

children and his household were going to be religious. This is a man it says **'he gave much alms to the Jewish people.'** He was wealthy, he gave away a lot of his money, he cared about human beings, which probably made him a great centurion to be under, probably he was great to be among his 100 men. He cared about people that were less fortunate, he saw that as part of his duty spiritually. And it says **"he prayed to God always,"** and the Greek indicates **"he prayed in all things."** So this is a man before he headed into battle he prayed. This is a man, when he had to go talk to one of his soldiers, or maybe write to a parent of a soldier that had been slain in battle, he prayed. This is a man, in different circumstances, whatever they might have been, it seems that he sought the Lord, he prayed.

God Continuing To Work At Both Ends Sends An Angel To Cornelius

And **"He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius."** (verse 3) "Evidently" now he didn't have a wrist watch. Now it's troubling enough when you see an angel coming in the middle of the day, and when he knows your name, that's a little more troubling. **"And when he looked on him,"** this battle hardened soldier **"he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."** (verse 4) Now what had he been praying? We don't know what he had been praying for. Had he been crying out to God *'Are you really there, I need to know you, I'm drawn to this, I see that, I believe in my heart that there's one God, I believe you're there, I don't know who you are. I believe it's right to do good to the less fortunate, I want to seek you, I want to hear from you,'* what had his prayers been? His prayers, his generosity had been noticed by Heaven. And the angel says **"now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."** (verses 5-6) Now, it seems to give us at least an insight into his prayers, because it says here, **'He'll tell you'** King James **'what you oughtest to do,'** now your translation may say **'what you need to do,'** the Greek says **"he will tell you what is necessary for you to do."** So I'm assuming that

part of this man's prayers were *'God, what is still necessary here? I believe, but there's still an emptiness,'* there was a genuine crying out to God. He says ***'This man will come and tell you what is necessary to do.'*** ***"And when the angel which spake to Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier"*** no doubt under his influence, a religious soldier ***"of them that waited on him continually; and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa."*** **(verses 7-8)** Now he declared, that's where we get our word "exegesis," he brought them in, he wrote down the whole circumstance, two of his servants and his soldier. Now he had to trust them, to tell them this story. You're gonna bring them in and say *'Hey, guess what happened to me about an hour ago? I was sitting and an angel came, visiting, and said 'Hey Cornelius, how you doing? I want you to send to Joppa, and I want you to get this man Simon Peter, because there's still something that is necessary, and he'll come and tell you about it,'* he had to trust these individuals greatly, and he exegetes, he breaks the whole thing down for them and describes it to them, the whole circumstance, and then he sent them to Joppa. Now that's 30 to 35 miles, probably walked along the coast, walking on sand makes a longer walk, they must have gone all night, because we find them getting there the next day, walking to Joppa from Caesarea.

The True Significance Of Cornelius

It says in **verse 9**, now ***"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house top to pray about the sixth hour:"*** about noon, maybe to get some fresh air, you're in the house of a tanner, I don't know, that's where the breeze was blowing up there. He went up on the roof, now look, God's working on both ends. Their paths have not intersected yet. On one end, we have this Gentile, and God is going to use him. Look, when Peter gets to this man's house, all his house, all his friends, his house is filled. Are there fifty people there? Are there 100 people? We don't know. This is the Gentile Pentecost that's going to take place. On Pentecost there were 120 in the upper room, they were Jews, and the Gospel then entered into Jerusalem. Yes, the Samaritans had accepted Christ, but they believed in the Torah, they had a priesthood similar to the Jews, they were half-

Jews [not really, they had been deported by the Assyrians, from the Caspian Sea region to the area of Samaria right after 721BC, but ok Joe]. The Ethiopian eunuch had accepted Christ, but this would be the Roman world, this will be the doorway to the western hemisphere, to you and I, sitting here tonight, it will effect the world for 2,000 years, this set of circumstances. [Comment: The Gentile/Sunday-observing part of the Body of Christ, which right now is the majority, sincerely believe this, and it is true, but what they often fail to see is that the real significance of this event ties directly into the calling of Saul to become an apostle to the Gentiles and just how Cornelius sets the stage as to what type of Gentile Paul was to witness to and give the Gospel to, and it was not to the ordinary pagan Gentile, but those who had become what the Jews and the Book of Acts term as "*God-fearers*," those who were already attending inside Jewish synagogues, those who had already accepted the God, singular, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These "*God-fearers*" were observing the Sabbath and Holy Days spelled out in the Torah, Leviticus chapter 23, as well as the dietary laws of Leviticus 11. They were also labeled as being "*devout*," another term used to describe this class of Gentile in the Book of Acts and by the Jews themselves. Cornelius was, yes, the key showing just where and how to reach the Gentile world, through a class of Gentile that was already familiar with the God of the Bible and his written Word (look, he was praying during the Jewish hour of prayer). The Jews, from the period of the Maccabees onward had powerfully evangelized to their Gentile neighbours who live around all their synagogues in the Middle East, primarily Babylonia, Asia Minor, and in Antioch of Syria. The Gentiles that responded to this Jewish evangelism ended up attending inside their synagogues, so what the Jews had done around all their synagogues is pre-evangelize to this group of Gentiles, unknowingly preparing them for the apostle Paul's missionary ministry to them. The main point being, what made Cornelius so important is that he is showing exactly what type of Gentile Paul and the Church should evangelize to, and it was not to the ordinary pagan Gentile, who could care less, and had no knowledge of the very Old Testament prophecies that predicted the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Only the *God-fearer Gentiles* would have known the Old Testament prophecies that prophecied the coming Messiah, Yeshua haMeschiach, preparing them for the apostle Paul's powerful evangelism which proved the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. So Cornelius is the primary key that shows the Jerusalem Church and Paul just exactly where his evangelism

should be targeted, and that is to the synagogues throughout Asia Minor and the empire, synagogues whose members were a combination of Jews and “God-fearing” or “devout” Gentiles. That is the true significance of Cornelius. This research article link below shows just how Paul evangelized to the Gentile world, and it was directly through the Jewish synagogues, to view this evidence, see: <https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>] And it has to be Peter, Philip already lives in Caesarea, God didn’t want it to be him, he wanted it to be the apostle Peter, because the apostle Peter is going to go back to Jerusalem and say **‘Hey, I got six witnesses I took with me, we were there preaching the Gospel [to Cornelius this Gentile and all his Gentile family and friends], and the Holy Ghost fell on them, they started to speak in tongues, just like what had happened to us on Pentecost, and when we saw that,’** and he says **‘you other six guys, ain’t that what happened?’** and they said **‘Yup,’** and he says **‘Who could forbid them that they should be baptized?’** and he’s going to realize that God puts no difference between the Jew and the Gentile in the Church [greater Body of Christ], the Gentiles don’t have to become Jews to get saved, he says they need to get baptized, it doesn’t say they need to get circumcised. This is a very, very significant chapter, because there was great animosity between Jews and Gentiles, there was great prejudice. [Comment: There was far less animosity in the Diaspora synagogues and amongst the Jews that attended them toward their Gentile neighbours, for one, because they lived in the nations of these Gentiles, why stir up persecution against themselves, and also because they targeted their Gentile neighbours for evangelism. This extreme prejudice mainly and only really existed in Judea and Jerusalem.] In fact, the Court of the Gentiles, even the Jews despised it, it’s where they sold their animals and so forth, and Jesus overturned the tables of the money-changers. And to get into the Court of Women, where only Jewish men and women were allowed, then there was the Court of Israel where only men were allowed to go, but there was a wall about three or four foot high, and in Latin and Greek it said “anybody who goes past this wall that’s a Gentile, does it at the cost of their life.” And the Romans had taken the right of the Jews away to execute the death sentence, except in their Temple. They reserved the right still to put a Gentile to death who crossed over that, what they called the Wall of Partition. And Paul in Ephesians chapter 2 will tell us that **‘the Lord has broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile and has made both one.’** Well here, there’s still

this great prejudice, so Peter, he's not aware of what's happened up in Caesarea, he goes up onto the roof, about the sixth hour it says, to pray, maybe just to get some fresh air, or maybe just to enjoy the ocean breeze, to look at the Mediterranean, **"And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to earth:" (verses 10-11)** now that's an encouragement to me, sometimes when I pray, all of a sudden I find myself thinking, *'Inspection's due, I gotta take care of that, 'how did I get from heaven to inspection!?' you find your mind wandering.* So here's Peter, he goes up on the roof, he's an apostle, he's got the same problem I do, he goes up there to pray, and the next thing he's thinking is *'Ah, something smells decent besides that skin boiling down there, he must have something better in the oven,'* so he becomes hungry, it says. Now no doubt God is turning his digestive juices, because it's going to be part of the process here, **"and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,"** now King James says "trance," the Greek is "extosis" he goes into a state of ecstasy, he's praying, he's enraptured with the presence of the Lord, **"and he saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein"** as he looks, **"were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." (verses 10b-12)** (now this is a picture, this is just an illustration of the Church) "all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things" which would be lizards and insects, "and fowls of the air," Peter's looking at this in amazement, **"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." (verse 13)** Now he knows it's from heaven, by his answer. And Peter, as only Peter can, says, **"Not so, Lord;"** here's a guy you gotta love, because you can say "not so" and you can say "Lord," but you can't say "not so, Lord." You can't put those ideas together, you know. You and I, every week, are in circumstances where we can say "not so" and we can say "Lord," but you can't say "Not so, Lord." Peter said **"Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." (verse 14)** He's a religious Jew, Peter. The tradition [comment: it's not a tradition, the dietary laws were an integral part of God's Torah law, and they're found in Leviticus 11. Modern medicine is finding that they are health laws, not just ceremonial laws. Recently it was discovered in biochemistry, that all shellfish have elevated levels of

dioxin, as compared to the fish with fins and scales, and dioxin is the key ingredient in Agent Orange, a powerful carcinogen used during the Vietnam War. Again, modern science is catching up with the Bible, gotta love it.] And you know, isn't it interesting, Jesus had talked to them, and specifically to Peter when he asked a question, and he said **'It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but what proceeds from the heart,'** because that's where adultery and murder and these other things come from, from the heart, **'it's not eating with unwashed hands, it's not the things that go into the mouth.'** Now Peter doesn't remember any of that, obviously. [Comment: Jesus was not telling Peter he could eat unclean food in the previous quote Pastor Joe just gave, because Jesus himself could not violate one single law found in the Torah if he was to be able to be the sinless, spotless sin offering for mankind.] And Peter says **"I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."** (verses 14b-15) So the Lord evidently said that the first time, he says it now the second time, and then the Holy Spirit tells us, **"This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."** (verse 16) what a beautiful picture of the Church by the way, clean and unclean, caught up to heaven. Ah, Peter is a guy, it seems, who always takes things in threes to get them down. Just in regards to dietary things, the Lord had said it's not what enters the man's mouth that defiles him. That was one shot that that chipped away a little of Peter. [Just an observation, Gentile Christians love to try to use this passage to justify the eating of things the Old Testament dietary laws said not to eat. But science this time is proving those laws have relevance to one's health, medically speaking. Jesus' teaching about what goes into the mouth is less important than what comes out of one's mouth is merely a comparison between the important aspects of God's spiritual law, as opposed to the importance of some physical health laws. Jesus never said we should break God's laws, but he did emphasize the weightier matters of the law. For John said "Sin is the transgression of the law." Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-19 that he came not to do away with God's law, and that those who teach that are in trouble. There are weightier matters of the law, such as justice, faith and mercy, as compared to the tithing on mint, anise and cumim, but Jesus also said that the less important of God's law ought not to be left undone, either.] And the Lord himself is giving Peter a vision, saying kill and eat, he's arguing with the Lord, **'not so, Lord,'** and then we find out

in the Book of Galatians chapter 2, Paul tells that Peter was in Antioch, was eating there with the Gentiles, and Barnabas enjoying himself, was eating pork roll, Italian sausage, and then it says certain brethren came with James from Jerusalem, and when Peter saw that, he withdrew back to the dietary laws again, and it says he even started to draw away Barnabas, and Paul said it was to such a point, that I had to stand up and confront him to his face in front of the church. It took him three times to get the eating thing down. [Now here again is a Gentile Christian interpretation, nowhere in Galatians did it say they were eating unclean food, pork rolls and so forth. But what it does say is that Peter and Barnabas were eating with the Gentiles, which the Jews in Judea and Jerusalem would never do, to sit at the same table with them. Obviously in this setting, there were two sets of tables, one Jewish, one Gentile, in the room where they were eating, in attempting to keep with tradition. They were following tradition, the tradition of eating in separation from each other, Jew and Gentile. But Peter and Barnabas were eating at the Gentile table, until the brethren and James came from Jerusalem into the room, and then Peter hightail's it back to the Jewish food table. These Gentiles would have been "God-fearer" Gentiles, who had previously attended synagogue, and were fully compliant with keeping the Sabbath, Holy Days, and dietary laws. Paul confronted Peter face to face for showing respect of persons in this situation, it had nothing to do with the dietary laws. Verse 28 of this same chapter gives the Biblical explanation for the vision of unclean animals and creatures, and shows it's referring to this custom of not keeping company with Gentiles, that is what the vision is all about, and the calling of Gentiles "unclean" or "common."] You see in the Garden of Gethsemane three times the Lord has to wake him up, when he's supposed to be praying. Interesting scene here, three times this happens, and then it's taken up from him, the vessel was received up into heaven, clean and unclean.

The True Meaning Of The Vision

Look at this, **"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which is surnamed Peter, were lodged there." (verses 17-18)**

Isn't that amazing, Peter's an apostle, the sheet comes down from heaven, he says **'Lord, I've never eaten anything unclean,'** three times the Lord says to him, **'Don't call that common which I have cleansed,'** and then it's taken up, and then it says he stands there wondering what that all means [and what that all means is explained in verse 28, that no man or woman is to be called "common" or "unclean"]. Peter, doubting, wondering, interesting. **"Now while Peter doubted in himself, what this vision he had seen should mean,"** it says **"behold,"** as that happened, **"the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house,"** and the neighbour said *'Smell your way there,'* **"and stood before the gate,"** they didn't come in, out of respect, for a Jew, they knew the prejudice between Jew and Gentile, and notice, **"and called, and asked whether Simon, which is surnamed Peter, were lodged there."** (verses 17-18) **"While Peter thought on the vision"** he's still thinking, *'Now up, then down, don't call common unclean,'* it says **'While he thought on the vision,'** isn't it interesting, **"the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee."** (verse 19) and it's clear enough so that he recognizes it, **'Behold, three men are seeking you.'** isn't that remarkable? He's struggling with the vision, but he can hear the voice of the Spirit here. Old tradition, so hard to tear down. Tradition so binds us sometimes, that Peter has a divine revelation, a divine vision, the Lord speaks to him from heaven, he's saying "Not so, Lord," that happens three times, he's trying to figure out what's going on, but the Holy Spirit says **'three men are looking for you,'** and he knows it immediately. Isn't it interesting? [We'll see Peter, when he finally understands what the vision was about, explains it to Cornelius and his guests in **verse 28, "And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."**] **"Arise therefore,"** the Spirit says, **"and get thee down, and go with them,"** doubting what the vision meant, **"for I have sent them."** (verse 20) Now look, here's the Lord working on both ends. He's got this man Cornelius. Cornelius has so influenced his wife, his children, his troops, his servants, that he's convinced them all that there's one God. He is so influential even though he doesn't know the whole truth, he doesn't know what's still necessary in his life. On that end, God's working by sending an angel. On this end, unbeknownst to Cornelius and Peter, unbeknownst to him the angel had come, he works in Peter's life, and he's saying **'What I have called clean call**

not thou common, Peter, this has got to stop, I don't want you to do this anymore,' because he's going to take him to the house of a Gentile. And how often in your life or in my life is God working on both ends? Now he does that. *'Go down, Peter, down to the sea and throw in your hook, pull out a fish and it'll already have a shekel in it's mouth, use that to pay the...'* the Lord working on both ends. *'Go over there and get a donkey, if they ask you what you're doing say the Lord has need of him, and he'll say go.'* Or follow somebody with a pitcher on their head, you know, things being worked out on both ends, God's so gracious, you know, coming to Jeremiah, saying *'your cousin Hananeel is going to come and try to sell you a piece of ground, buy that piece of ground,'* and then Hananeel comes and tries to sell him the ground, and Jeremiah says ***'Then I knew that it was the Lord talking to me.'*** That's an encouragement to me, because I thought a prophet is supposed to know all the time. He didn't know until the thing God said was going to happen happened, then he realized *'How often is God working on both ends to get to our hearts?'* And here, he's got Peter set up, he's got Cornelius set up, he's making the connections, ***"Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?" (verse 21) "And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God,*** [i.e. he's what the Jews termed "a God-fearer"] ***and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee." (verse 22)*** And Peter may have never been in the house of a Gentile before. Notice, ***"Then called he them in, and lodged them, And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him." (verse 23) "And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and called together his kinsmen and near friends." (verse 24)*** We're told in chapter 11, verse 12, he took six men from Joppa with him. So, imagine this scene. Now we have, in the house of a tanner where nobody should be, an apostle, we have a Roman soldier and two Roman servants, Simon the tanner, you know, all of the walls are breaking down here. And Peter I think doesn't even realize the magnitude at this point, of what is taking place. And it says the next day Peter takes six other men from the church in Joppa as witnesses, because he's figuring *'I need somebody to cover me here in this,'* so, ten of them begin to walk between 30 and 35 miles from Joppa up the coast to Caesarea, and what was that conversation

like? They invited Gentiles into the house of Simon the tanner, Simon the tanner was a Jew, Peter must have said *'You mind if these Gentiles come in?'* he said, *'Ya, nobody ever stays at my house, sure it's fine with me, I don't mind.'* Just what an interesting night that must have been, and think of that 30 mile walk, what they must have talked about, what this soldier and these servants must have talked to Peter about, what Peter must have asked them about Cornelius, and what was happening in Caesarea. Did he say *'Have you guys met Phillip, I know he's there,'* just a 30 mile hike together. Wouldn't you love to have the tape of that conversation? I sure would. We're going to have to pick up with this next Sunday night, as we move along with it. So, I encourage you, read ahead, let's follow this journey with Simon Peter to the house of Cornelius. Please read ahead and take note of the message that's preached, and how the Holy Spirit acknowledges that, and falls on this Gentile group of believers, that become believers, as Peter preaches this message. Look at the power and the simplicity of it, because that message has not changed in 2,000 years, very, very important for us here tonight. Let's stand, let's pray together...[transcript of an expository sermon on Acts 9:36-43 and Acts 10:1-24, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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The true significance of Cornelius and God's calling of him showed the Church exactly what type of Gentile they should witness and evangelize to – *"the God-fearer," the "devout" Gentile.* For proof, see: <https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>