

## The Apostle Peter

And you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root.—Romans 11:17

**C**ornelius, a Gentile, prayed to God and respected him, but he was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He knew about Jesus and wanted to follow him and do God's will, but that opportunity was not available to him or any other Gentile.

An angel of the Lord appeared to Cornelius in a vision. He told Cornelius that God had heard his prayers and that he should find a man named Peter who would explain God's will to him. So Cornelius sent two of his servants to the house where Peter was staying.

In the meantime, God instructed Peter about Cornelius. Up until that time God had dealt only with the Jewish people. But now, three and a half years after Jesus' death on the cross, God's invitation to become part of the church class was to be extended to the Gentiles. Cornelius would be the first Gentile convert.

This was a new concept to Peter and the others for they had been forbidden by the law to have close friends among the Gentiles or to marry into their families. Had the Jews faithfully followed Jesus Christ, the entire church would have been selected from that nation. However, comparatively few responded to the call and so the invitation went to the Gentiles as soon as the Jewish age ended.

Peter learned through a vision that God's instructions about the Gentiles were changing. Peter saw a great sheet come down

from heaven which contained many different four-footed beasts, all of which had always been forbidden for Jews to eat as they were considered unclean. Now God told Peter to kill and eat them. This happened three times. While Peter thought about the vision, three men came to ask him to go to the house of Cornelius. Peter and several others went to Cornelius' home immediately.

They found Cornelius and his family eagerly waiting to hear what Peter had to say. Peter told them the true story of Jesus—his death, his resurrection, the call to the church to be his bride. They were delighted to hear the message and fully accepted the terms of discipleship.

God poured out his holy spirit upon them and they received the gifts of speaking in foreign tongues just as the Jewish believers had at Pentecost. They were all baptized in the name of the Lord—and Peter learned that “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34). The Gospel age had begun.



*Original Photo-Drama slide*

Peter's vision showed him to accept the Gentiles into the church.