

CORNELIUS: THE CENTURION (II)
Acts 10:34-43

Introduction:

1. God promised Abraham: “In your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8).
2. The prophets foretold the Gentiles would seek the Lord (Acts 15: 14-17).
3. On Pentecost, Peter preached: “For the promise is to you and to your children (Jews) and to all who are afar off (Gentiles) as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39).
4. In spite of this, It took ten years and a vision repeated three times to convince Jewish Christians that Gentiles were also to receive the Gospel.
5. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was the first Gentile to receive the Gospel.
6. Because the circumstances of his conversion are unusual, many false conclusions regarding conversion are drawn.

Discussion:

I. DO ANGELS TELL SINNERS WHAT TO DO TO BE SAVED?

A. Angels are messengers of God.

1. “Angel” is from “angelos” which means “messenger.”
2. Angels are “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).

B. The Gospel has been committed to men, not angels (Matt. 28:18-20).

1. It is a “treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).
2. There is no faith where the Gospel has not been preached (Romans 10:13, 14).

C. An angel appeared to Cornelius, but told him to send for Peter who “will tell you words by which you and your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14).

II. DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT OPERATE DIRECTLY ON SINNERS TO SAVE THEM?

A. The Spirit is involved in every conversion, but the question is how.

1. Calvinists teach that the Spirit must operate directly on the sinner's heart to enable him to believe.
 2. The Bible teaches that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).
 3. Paul asked: "How shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14; Mark 16:15).
- B. The Holy Spirit convicts the heart of the sinner through the preaching of God's Word (John 3:3-5; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 Cor. 4:15).**
1. The Spirit spoke to Peter, the preacher, not Cornelius, the sinner, to tell Peter to go to Cornelius (Acts 10:17-20).
 2. Cornelius was told to send for Peter "who will tell you words by which you and all your house will be saved" (Acts 11:14).
- III. MUST ONE BE BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE SAVED?**
- A. The Scriptures speak of three gifts (measures) of the Holy Spirit.**
1. The baptism in the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7,8; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4).
 2. Miraculous gifts of the Spirit given by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-21; Acts 19:1-6).
 3. The non-miraculous gift given to every Christian when he is baptized (Acts 2:38).
- B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised to the apostles (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5,8).**
1. The baptism of the Spirit was always a promise, never a command.
 2. The baptism of the Spirit was to:
 - a. Bring to the apostles' remembrance all that Jesus had taught them (John 14:26).
 - b. Testify of Christ (John 15:26).
 - c. Convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).
 - d. Guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13).
 - e. Glorify Christ (John 16:14).
- C. Cornelius and his household received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-47).**
1. They received it while Peter was still preaching to them and before they had been baptized in water.

2. They spoke in tongues just as the apostles did on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).
3. Peter asked: “Can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”
4. When called upon to defend what he had done, Peter said: “The Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning” (Pentecost - Acts 2; 11:1-18).
5. He added: “Then I remembered the Word of the Lord, how He said: ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”
6. He also said: “...if God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus who was I that I could withstand God?”
 - a. The Greek word for “same” is “isos” which means equal (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of NT Words).
 - b. The word for similar or like, ‘omoios, is not used here.

D. Unusual circumstances attended the conversion of Cornelius and his household.

1. An angel directed Cornelius to send for Peter.
2. The Spirit told Peter to go with the men sent by Cornelius.
3. Cornelius and his household were baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to convince the Jewish Christians that Gentiles were also to receive the Gospel.
4. It had the desired effect for the Jewish Christians “glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’” (Acts 11:18).

Conclusion:

1. The case of Cornelius and his household contained exceptional circumstances which were not part of the conversion process.
2. Cornelius and his family obeyed the same pattern of doctrine everyone else then and now must obey in order to be saved (Romans 6:16-18).
 - a. The Gospel was preached to them.
 - b. They heard the Gospel and believed.
 - c. Their repentance is implied (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38).
 - d. Their confession is also implied (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10).
 - e. They were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 10:47,48).
3. Were you converted according to the inspired examples in Acts?

