

Episode #1202 Acts 10 Part 2-Peter's Message to Cornelius

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. Peter had reached the household of Cornelius, and he proclaimed an important truth he had come to learn to them: that in every nation one who fears God and works righteousness is accepted with Him. This is a lesson that many in the Christian world today deny, yet all could use to learn it. Now, we will learn what else Peter proclaimed to the household of Cornelius.

III. Peter Preaches the Gospel to Cornelius. Acts 10:34-43.

- A. Verse 36. Peter speaks the message for them. “The word” = Greek *logos*, the expression of truth which God sent to them. “Sent” = Greek *apostello*. When used of people, it means sent with authority or commissioned. When it speaks of an inanimate thing (like here, “the word”), it means authorized or made available. It had been made freely available to the sons of Israel, but it had only been available to Israel until now! The sons of Israel were the men living at any one time who represented that nation as a whole. The word is *huios* or sons, and should not be translated “children.” If a Gentile heard, he could not receive, for it was not authorized to him. He might ask that a word be authorized to him sometime in the future, Acts 13:42. Until that occurred, he could not receive it. Now something new happened, for God authorized this word to a Gentile man Cornelius and his household. Preaching is heralding peace through Jesus Christ. Now Peter tells them Jesus Christ is Lord of all. A strong statement, but if they hear it and receive it, they are on the road to faith!
- B. Verse 37. How could Cornelius already know this word? He was a soldier of the occupying force, a lot like a police officer. It was his business to know about any major event in the nation he had charge over, and to keep his eye on conditions that prevailed there. Jesus Christ had appeared on the scene and there were so many people who were followers of Him, he had a duty to learn about them. He would have been derelict in his duty not to know about this. As he studied it, he would have learned there was no apparent threat to Rome in it. Yet he would have heard what He was proclaiming, but he had done nothing to believe this word or procure it for himself. He knew the word was not for him (until now!). Proclaimed is heralded. Galilee was the northern district in Israel, and Judea was the southern. The proclaiming had started all the way back after the baptism of John.
- C. Verse 38. God had anointed (set apart) Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. “Holy spirit” = *pneumati hagio* in Greek, and means the power of the Spirit, not the Person. Make this, “with holy spirit, even with power.” The word “oppressed” here has to do with overpowered. By healing those the devil overpowered, He proved He was stronger than the devil. Cornelius would have heard of it. Peter says He was able to do this because God was with Him.
- D. Verse 39. Peter and those who are with him are witnesses. These things were not exaggerated or imaginary. Yet in Jerusalem, he reveals, they, meaning the rulers there, had killed Him by hanging Him on a tree. “They” here means the Jerusalemites, or particularly the leaders among them.

- E. Verse 40. God raised Him up on the third day, when death was final and complete according to the Jewish way of thinking of things. He had then manifested Him openly. These things were not done in secret.
- F. Verse 41. He did not appear to all, but to witnesses who not only saw Him, but also ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. Eating and drinking = the closest possible fellowship. This might be more impressive than if He had appeared to all the people. The masses could have been deceived, but those who were closest to Him could not be, so they knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that this was their Lord.
- G. Verse 42. “And He commanded us to proclaim and certify to the people that it is He Who was specified of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.” The Lord instructed them to proclaim to the people, that is, to the Israelites. This was his testimony, even as he stood speaking it to a Gentile! Many imagine that the apostles misunderstood the Lord, and He had always meant them to go to the Gentiles. Yet this is not the testimony of Peter, God’s chosen witness, speaking by inspiration. It is the modern-day expositors, not the apostles, who do not understand the Lord’s command properly. The Judge in their mindset was one who would determine what was right in any given situation, and then would set things right according to his determination. A judge differed little from a king in Old Testament times, other than that they did not have hereditary lineage. The Lord will determine regarding all the living and dead as to their worthiness or unworthiness to live in the kingdom of God, and if they are worthy, what position they shall hold in it. II Timothy 4:1, Paul says the same thing.
- H. Verse 43. Peter now comes to the heart of the matter. The prophets witnessed to this when they spoke of the One Who was to come as a Savior. Through His name (His character and authority), whoever believes in Him will receive remission (forgiveness) of sins. There will be no charge against them for sin. There will be no guilt that remains. There will be no fault to be found by God. There will be nothing for which they could be brought into God’s court and judged. Notice it says believing in Him with no additions. Believing in Him is the only criterion for this forgiveness, not joining a church, doing good works, etc. Forgiveness of sins still comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ today. Do you have this forgiveness?

IV. Cornelius and His Household Believe. Act 10:44-48.

- A. Verse 44. Notice again how short this word was. Just ten short verses. No sooner did they hear the word than they believed it. These were the kind of people whom God is ever ready to call His Own! The first time “words” = Greek *rhema*, a saying or the actual words used, whereas the second time it says “word” = Greek *logos*, expression. Peter was speaking an actual saying contained in words, and yet it was also an expression of God. In the Acts period when a person believed the message he was given by God, it was an obvious thing. There would be sufficient evidence that everyone could see that something had happened. It was out of the realm of humankind, it was out of the realm of the things of men. It was something that was definitely and positively of God. We will see what exactly this was. “The Holy Spirit” = Greek *to pneuma to hagion*, or “the Spirit the Holy (One).” Thus it was the Person of the Spirit Who fell upon them. Yet He did so through His power, verse 46.

B. Verse 45. We read of the reaction of those (six, Acts 11:12) Jewish brethren who had accompanied Peter.

1. They are all astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out on the nations (not Jews, meaning the Roman Gentile Cornelius and his household) also. Even though they knew Peter had been sent to this household, they did not imagine this would happen. Notice that it had to be something they could see and that was manifest.
2. Before this the gift of the Spirit was only for the Israelites. Their surprise shows us God could not have been calling Jews and Gentiles together into “the church” ever since Acts 2. Cornelius and his household were the first Gentile believers, and the first non-Jews to receive the gift of the Spirit.
3. “Of the Holy Spirit” = Greek *tou hagiou pneumatos*, or “of-the Holy Spirit,” in Greek. The Person of the Spirit is referred to. The full phrase is “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” so once again the Giver is connected with His gift. This is ever the case throughout the New Testament.

C. Verse 46. The gift of the Spirit they saw was that Cornelius and those with him spoke with tongues, magnifying God in the languages they were speaking. They flawlessly spoke languages they had never learned. This proved to these Jewish brethren that this could be no less than the work of God. It would be a rare thing indeed for a man in Israel to be just a one-language man. With these six men here, Peter making seven men, you would have found each man spoke at least two tongues, and there would probably be among these seven people eight or ten or maybe even twelve languages represented. As I said, rare it would be for a man to speak only one language. But now among these people they hear them speak with languages. It would have been nothing if these people made sounds. It wouldn’t have indicated anything if these people had babbled, and there had been no message here. But they heard them speak with languages and magnify God, just as we had it in Acts 2:11. Now whatever they say is not just some senseless babble, not something that men could say that they are insane. No; they heard them speak with these languages, languages that were not the learned language of these people, but different languages that these seven men were familiar with, and they were magnifying God.

D. Verse 47. Peter speaks to the men of the circumcision.

1. Peter puts this question to these men who have come along with him. They are Jews, and they would be glad to make proselytes of these people and add them to the people of Israel. Law-keeping Israelites normally would have demanded that men must be circumcised and agree to keep the law of Moses before they could be counted as part of the nation of Israel. But even though it might seem logically or religiously or culturally wrong to them, how could they forbid this to men who had already received the Holy Spirit?
2. Peter wanted these men to be identified, and he has the authority to do it. He is going to identify them and merge them with Jesus Christ, and identify and merge them in such a way that if they were to abandon the Lord Jesus Christ, it would be equivalent to a soldier leaving his post of duty, and it would be treason against the Lord Jesus Christ, and they could be dealt with accordingly. To be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ in the Acts period was no small thing, and when a man with the standing and authority of Peter had

performed the ceremony that identified and merged you with Jesus Christ, when he had done this thing, believe me you it was an important thing that could not be lightly taken. He will do this by means of a water ritual, with the company of believers in the Christ that until now had been made up only of Israelites. Once they were identified with Him, they were part of God's government, and it would be too late for them to back out, like a man who is sworn into the army as a soldier.

3. Men who perform baptisms today identify men with a certain church. Yet Peter was qualified by God to act as His apostle, and so when he identified a man, that man was identified with God, even with the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Peter's proof that he should do this was that they had received the Holy Spirit even as the Jews had. This "speaking in tongues" then must be the same as what happened on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, not something new consisting of meaningless sounds, as some suggest. No; they had received the Holy Spirit just as they had done. The Jews would have been reminded of the worship in Greek temples if they had heard something like babble, and would have rejected these men as idolaters.

5. "The Holy Spirit" = Greek *to pneuma to hagion*, the Person of the Spirit.

E. Verse 48. None could object, so Peter baptizes them. I believe there was a water ceremony here, but I believe behind the ritual there was a glorious reality. If all anyone sees is the ceremony, then they are guilty of having the forms of godliness but denying the power thereof. Yes, there was a water ceremony here, but there was more than that. He commanded these men to be identified with Jesus Christ, he commanded them to be merged with Him. This was done, and now they were identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, even to the point of being merged with Him. Cornelius and his group now ask Peter to stay with them a few days, probably wanting to learn more truth about Christ. We cannot blame them. Imagine having God's messenger in your house! As far as we can tell, Peter granted their request. This completes this pivotal point in Acts.

V. Conclusion: Peter's message got through to the household of Cornelius, and they believed. Yet there will be a backlash to this that Peter must face. We will study this next time in Acts 11.