

**1178 God baptizes Cornelius and others with Holy Spirit and water - Acts(10)1-48  
(by Whirlwind)**

**First, we see that God shows no partiality. He proactively revealed Himself to Cornelius, a devout man in the Italian cohort. Cornelius obeyed God and immediately invited Peter to his home. Second, we see Peter in a vision where he saw the heavens opened and was told three times that what God has cleansed, he must no longer consider unholy. Third, Peter obeyed the Holy Spirit's leading to go to the Gentile Cornelius. Fourth, we see Cornelius explaining before everyone how the Lord had appeared to him and his response. Fifth, the text describes Peter's effective preaching to Cornelius and the others. While he was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon all who heard the message. Finally, we see Peter baptizing Cornelius and the other Gentiles with water.**

**Please note: This article is based on the Sunday (2/8/26) topicwise Bible study. Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. Past articles referenced can be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>', under 'On spiritual understanding about life.'**

**1. The gentile Cornelius saw an angel of God in a vision.**

**"Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually. About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, "Cornelius!" And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter; he is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea." When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa."(Acts 10:1-8)**

**Cornelius belonged to the Italian cohort and was undoubtedly a Gentile. This demonstrates that there were devout individuals among the Gentiles. Cornelius and his entire household revered God. The Old Testament makes it clear that the triune God treats all equally. For example, concerning the observance of the Passover: "But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you."(Exodus 12:48-49) This echoes the New Testament's repeated declaration: "For there is no partiality with God."(Romans 2:11)**

**Here we see God taking the initiative, sending an angel in a vision to instruct Cornelius to seek Peter. Once Cornelius recognized this as God's will, he acted "immediately" in obedience—exactly what we should do. We also observe that birds of a feather flock**

together: the soldier who served him was a devout man. Last week we explained that Simon Peter staying at the home of Simon the tanner by the sea was meant to illustrate God's sense of humor, so we won't dwell on that further.

## **2. The opening of heaven and the message Peter saw in the vision**

**"On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance (G1611); and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." Again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky."(Acts 10:9-16)**

**This passage primarily addresses "...What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."(Acts 10:15) I used to think that seeing something happen three times must be God's work, but that's not necessarily true. God has absolute sovereignty in these matters—He decides, and our role is to discern. This is because we often see God guiding people through seemingly coincidental events, like in the Book of Ruth. Yet not every coincidence signifies divine guidance. Remember God's absolute sovereignty, and never forget that He employs feedback strategies (cf. Ezekiel 33:1-20). Even when the Holy Spirit does not lead us to take the first step, we must always stand on God's side to make decisions (cf. Acts 16:6-12).**

## **3. Peter obeyed the Holy Spirit's leading to visit Cornelius**

**"Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate; and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there. While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself." Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?" They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you." So he invited them in and gave them lodging. And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him."(Acts 10:17-23)**

**Peter saw the vision but did not understand its meaning. Just then, the three men sent by Cornelius arrived. It seemed coincidental, but it was not—God was at work. For it was the**

Holy Spirit who truly sent them, guided by the vision Cornelius had seen. Here we see Peter's obedience to God as he welcomed three Gentile visitors—a remarkable act, especially since Jews of that time regarded Gentiles as dogs beneath them. Jesus' words reflect this custom: "And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once."(Matthew 15:22-28) You see, the triune God shows no partiality; He looks at faith.

As we mentioned earlier, welcoming Gentiles was difficult for Peter, for he said, "...By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."(Acts 10:14) But the Lord wanted him to see, "...What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."(Acts 10:15) For Peter, obeying God was more important than following custom. We need to have the one phrase from the Book of Revelation addressed to the seven churches, it is this: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."(Revelation 3:6) Whether the Holy Spirit speaks directly to us, as in Peter's case, or through others—as when Peter told the crowd, "...Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."(Acts 2:38), we must have ears to hear. Only then can we fulfill Paul's instruction: "Do not quench the Spirit."(1 Thessalonians 5:19)

#### 4. Cornelius explained to Peter before the crowd how the Lord had appeared to him

"On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am just a man." As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me." Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.' So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."(Acts 10:24-33)

The crowd here included Cornelius, his relatives, close friends, and several brothers from Joppa. We also see Cornelius's natural human reaction upon seeing Peter—he fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter clearly understood he was only a man; the One worthy of honor was the Lord. Peter also knew that according to the customs of that time, it was improper for Jews to associate with people from other nations. Yet he obeyed God and came without hesitation, knowing that now Cornelius and his companions were all before God, ready to hear everything the Lord had commanded him to say.

## 5. Peter's effective preaching to Cornelius and his household

"Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)— you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message."(Acts 10:34-44)

Peter's preaching was remarkably concise. As the text shows, he articulated the essential truths of the gospel—from God's impartiality to the Great Commission (cf. Matthew 28:18-20)—culminating in the declaration: "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."(Acts 10:43) We will not elaborate further, but encourage you to read the passage yourself.

This was a brief yet effective sermon, for "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message."(Acts 10:44) This was the first baptism of the Holy Spirit among Gentiles after Jesus' resurrection, accomplished through Peter. This is also what Paul said: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."(Romans 1:16) The plan of salvation follows an order. That is, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.""(Romans 11:25-26)

## **6. Peter baptizes Cornelius and the Gentiles who had received the Holy Spirit**

**"All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days."(Acts 10:45-48)**

**Here we see the second important thing Peter was to do in this place: baptizing the Gentiles, including Cornelius and the whole household, in the name of Jesus Christ. We also see that baptism in the Great Commission is to be done in the name of Jesus Christ, and thus return to the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the next chapter, we see Peter defending this action and why the six brothers accompanied him—so they could effectively testify to what had happened (see Acts 11:12-18). We note that these brothers who came with him were circumcised as usual, which explains why the first Jerusalem Council later took place (see Acts 15:1-29).**