



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 10

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Introduction

In This Chapter We Will Study:

- The conversion of Cornelius and his household, the first Gentiles to obey the gospel
- The need for religious and devout people to be saved, despite their good works
- The purpose of the Holy Spirit falling upon the Gentiles, based on the context



Introduction

- Up to this time, the gospel had been preached only to Jews
- With the conversion of Cornelius and his household, Gentiles were now granted repentance that leads to eternal life
- Because the Law of Moses for generations had forbid socializing with Gentiles, it took a series of miraculous events to help Jewish Christians realize that they should no longer consider those of other nations as common or unclean.

Cornelius Sends a Delegation (10:1-8)



- Cornelius, a Roman soldier in Caesaria, was extremely religious
- Cornelius is a Latin name, and shows that the man was doubtless a Roman
- Centurion - One who was the commander of a division in the Roman army, consisting of 100 men. A captain of 100
- A person who worships the true God, and is no idolater
- He was benevolent and a man of prayer
- He took care to instruct his family in the knowledge which he himself had received; and to establish the worship of God in his house
- He gave alms generously

Cornelius Sends a Delegation (10:1-8)



- About the ninth hour of the day, or three o'clock in the afternoon, which was the hour of prayer, Acts 3:1 in which exercise he was now engaged, he sees an angel of God
- Who tells him his prayers and alms have come up for a memorial before God
- His fervent prayers and charity to the poor, though not saving him, were noticed by God
- Filled with awe, he inquired the meaning of the appearance
- He was heard because he was yearning for light

Cornelius Sends a Delegation (10:1-8)



- He is not told to go, because a soldier could not leave his post without orders
- But to send for St. Peter, who is lodging with Simon the tanner in Joppa
- Joppa is about thirty miles south of Caesarea
- The angel was not sent to instruct Cornelius himself, but to direct him to an apostle of Christ, and minister of the Gospel, who should do it; for not angels, but men, are employed in the ministry of the word, which is the ordinary means of spiritual knowledge, and of increasing it

Cornelius Sends a Delegation (10:1-8)



- Cornelius' action: Calls for two of his servants and a devout soldier and tells them what happened and sends them to Joppa
- It has already been remarked that Cornelius had taken care to instruct his family in Divine things; and it appears also that he had been attentive to the spiritual interests of his regiment

St. Peter's Vision (10:9-16)



- Starting in the evening, after three o'clock, they could be near Joppa, thirty miles distant, the next day, at the sixth hour, or about twelve o'clock
- The next day St. Peter goes to the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour
- Hungry, he falls into trance while food was being prepared
- a trance—differing from the "vision" of Cornelius, in so far as the things seen had not the same objective reality, though both were supernatural

St. Peter's Vision (10:9-16)



- He sees a great sheet bound at the four corners
- Descending down to the earth
- As it had been - It is important to mark this expression
- The sacred writer does not say that St. Peter literally saw such an object descending
- It was not a literal descent of a vessel, but it was such a kind of representation to him, producing the same impression, and the same effect, as if such a vessel had descended.

St. Peter's Vision (10:9-16)



- This particular vision was suggested by St. Peter's hunger
- It was designed, however, to teach him an important lesson in regard to the introduction of all nations to the gospel
- He saw all kinds of animals, those ceremonially unclean and prohibited by the Mosaic law
- He is told to kill and eat
- He protests that he is never eaten anything common or unclean
- He is told "What God has cleansed you must not call common"
- The ceremonial distinctions are at an end
- This was done three times, and then it was taken back into heaven

Summoned to Caesarea (10:17-23)



- While he is in doubts and perplexity what the full meaning of the vision might be, the messengers, who had been dispatched under the guidance of an especial Providence, came to the door
- In all this we find an admirable display of the economy of Providence
- Cornelius prays, and has a vision which prepares him to receive instruction from St. Peter
- St. Peter prays, and has a vision which prepares and disposes him to give instruction to Cornelius
- The prejudices of St. Peter against the Gentiles, would have prevented his going to Cornelius, unless the Lord had prepared him for this service

Summoned to Caesarea (10:17-23)



- It was while he was thinking over the matter that the messenger came
- The Spirit tells Peter to go with them, doubting nothing
- When we see our call clear to any service, we should not be perplexed with doubts and scruples arising from prejudices or former ideas
- He still did not know the full import of the vision; but being informed by the Holy Spirit that three men were seeking him, and that he should go with them, without scruple, he instantly obeyed; and finding them at the door, desired to know why they sought him

Summoned to Caesarea (10:17-23)



- St. Peter called in the men, hears their story about Cornelius and took care of them till the next day
- He then returned with them
- Six Jewish brethren from Joppa went with him (Acts 11:12)

St. Peter Meets Cornelius (10:24-33)



- Cornelius was waiting for St. Peter with family and close friends
- He had an eager desire to hear the word from St. Peter's mouth; and was longing and looking for the coming of him, and he and his family were in a waiting posture, and ready to hear the word, when the apostle of Christ should come: it would be well if this was always the case of the hearers of the word, to assemble before their ministers come; and be waiting for them, and in full expectation of them, and ready to receive them, and the words of grace which drop from their lips:
- Falling down at St. Peter's feet, as an act of profound regard for him as an ambassador of God
- Observe Peter's conduct: Instead of receiving worship, he forbade him, as he was only a man

St. Peter Meets Cornelius (10:24-33)



- Cornelius had met St. Peter at some short distance from his house, and they conversed together till they went in
- St. Peter addressed the whole company, among whom, it appears, there were persons well acquainted with Jewish customs; probably some of them were Jewish proselytes
- God has shown him not to call any man common or unclean
- So he came without objection, and is ready to hear why they sent for him
- He now began to understand the import of the vision which he saw at Joppa
- A Gentile is not to be avoided because he is a Gentile; God is now taking down the partition wall which separated them from the Jews

St. Peter Meets Cornelius (10:24-33)



- Cornelius had called together his friends, to partake with him of the heavenly wisdom he expected from St. Peter
- Cornelius recounts his vision which occurred four day previously, while he fasted and prayed
- When he was visited by a man in bright clothing and told to send for St. Peter
- The people were all waiting for the preacher, and every heart was filled with expectation; they waited as before God, from whose messenger they were about to hear the words of life
- It was an assembly of devout men who recognized the fact that St. Peter had a message of the Lord for them; the first Gentile audience that ever listened to a gospel sermon

Preaching to Cornelius' Household (10:34-43)



- The same preacher who, on the day of Pentecost, declared the conditions of salvation to the Jews now declares them for the first time to the Gentiles
- He sees that God shows no partiality
- In every nation whoever fears God and works righteousness is accepted by Him
- It has just dawned on him that Jew and Gentile are on the same footing in God's sight
- This was what the vision was designed to teach, and to communicate this knowledge to the apostles was an important step in their work of spreading the gospel

Preaching to Cornelius' Household (10:34-43)



- God sent Jesus, Lord of all, to the children of Israel, preaching peace
- This account of Jesus of Nazareth you cannot be unacquainted with; because it has been proclaimed throughout all Judea and Galilee, from the time that John began to preach
- You have heard how he was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and of the miracles which he performed; how he went about doing good, and healing all kinds of demoniacs and, by these mighty and beneficent acts, giving the fullest proof that God was with him

Preaching to Cornelius' Household (10:34-43)



- This was the exordium of St. Peter's discourse; and thus he begins, from what they knew, to teach them what they did not know
- The apostle refers to Christ as the promised Messiah; for, as Messiah signifies the anointed one
- Christ was killed by hanging on the tree
- Raised the third day, and shown openly to witnesses chosen before by God
- Who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead

Preaching to Cornelius' Household (10:34-43)



- They were witnesses not only of his life and power, but of his resurrection
- In this speech St. Peter may refer, not only to the twelve apostles, but to the six brethren whom he had brought with him
- St. Peter and others were commanded to testify that Jesus was ordained to the Judge of the living and the dead
- He commanded them in the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:14-18)
- Three important facts are stated: (1) that remission of sins is in the name of Christ; (2) that it is only granted on condition of belief upon him; that is, trust in his name; (3) that whosoever believes thus, Jew or Gentile, shall receive remission of sins

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (10:44-48)



- While St. Peter continued to discourse with them on this subject, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word; and his descent was known by their being enabled to speak with different kinds of tongues
- By this, God showed that the Gentiles were to be admitted to the same privileges with the Jews, and to the blessings of salvation in the same manner.
- Those of the circumcision who believed were astonished because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (10:44-48)



- This miraculous outpouring was extraordinary, and the object is plain to convince St. Peter and his fellow Jews that God had accepted the Gentiles; the same reason for which St. Peter's vision had been given
- This is the only instance recorded of the Spirit falling on unbaptized persons
- This exception is made to convince the Jewish Christians that uncircumcised Gentiles were fit subjects of baptism
- St. Peter had to recall this fact in order to convince the church at Jerusalem that he had done right (Acts 11:2,3,15)
- As on Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell on Jews, so now when Gentiles receive the Gospel they are baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15,16)

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (10:44-48)



- St. Peter was now satisfied that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews
- He asks his Jewish brethren if any man can give a reason why they should not be baptized
- Commands them to be baptized in the name of the Lord
- St. Peter was invited to stay a few days that they might be more instructed and established by him
- These baptized persons very likely laid the foundation of a Gospel church state in this place



Conclusion

- Who was Cornelius? What were he and his family like?
- How his “prayers and gifts to the poor [came] up as a memorial offering before God.”
- What was Cornelius told to do?
- Why was St. Peter on the roof of the house at noon?
- What happened while he was praying? What did he see?



Conclusion

- What had Cornelius done to prepare for St. Peter's visit?
- How was St. Peter received by Cornelius? How did he respond?
- What was the outcome of Peter's preaching?
- Why do you think they received the Holy Spirit so quickly?
- What was the sign of them receiving the Holy Spirit?
- What did St. Peter command them to do & what did they pray him to do?