

June 10, 2018

“Empowered: The Church on Fire!”

“A Journey through the Book of Acts”

“A New Fire Is Ignited!”

“Then Peter asked, ‘Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?’”

Acts 10:47

A. Caesarea...

“In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment.” Acts 10:1

1. Peter went from Jerusalem to Lydda. Lydda was about 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem. In Lydda, Aeneas, a paralytic, was healed through Peter.
2. Peter, also, went to Joppa. Joppa was only 11 miles away from Lydda. In Joppa, Tabitha (or Dorcas), was dead and was brought back to life through Peter.
3. Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with Simon the Tanner.
4. The next dramatic setting for the gospel advancement is Caesarea. Caesarea on the Sea was 50 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Caesarea was the seat of the Roman government in both Palestine and Syria. (There was another Caesarea Philippi mentioned in Mark 8:27.) It had a massive harbor complex.

“The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord. And Peter stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner of hides.” Acts 9:42-43

B. Cornelius the soldier...

“Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,” Acts 10:1 NASB

1. Cornelius was an Italian, Roman soldier. Approximately 65% of the Roman armies were Italian.
2. Cornelius was a high-ranking officer and certainly over 30 years of age. In the army, it took 12-16 years to be eligible for promotion.
3. A centurion was in charge of about 80 soldiers. A cohort was a leadership position of approximately 480 soldiers, five units of infantry. This would have determined him to be a literate man with administrative skills.

4. Roman soldiers were prohibited from being married, unless you were very high ranking. Cornelius had a family. Roman soldiers were not permitted personal use of their soldiers unless they were high ranking, as well.
5. There were often troubles between the Syrian Gentiles and the Jews in the city. Whenever trouble broke out, the soldiers often sided with the Syrian Gentiles. In fact, in 66 AD a single wave of genocide happened and soldiers slaughtered 20,000 Jews.

C. Cornelius the seeker...

“He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God.” Acts 10:2

1. Cornelius was devout in his faith of the one true God and he was a spiritual leader to his family.
2. Cornelius was definitely putting himself out there by believing in the one true God. Most of the soldiers believed in and worshipped many gods. For example, they feared that Mars might not grant them success in battle if they did not worship Mars.
3. Cornelius could not worship in the synagogue because he was considered unclean. In spite of this, he worshipped the one true God as he was able at the times recommended.
4. Although the Romans felt superior to the Jews, the Jews felt superior to the Romans. Cornelius was a humble man.
5. God heard his prayers and saw his good deeds. With this in mind, God sent an angel to him with a message.

“And the angel replied, ‘Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering!’” Acts 10:4b

D. Peter's sermon does it again...

“Then Peter replied, ‘I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation He accepts those who fear Him and do what is right. This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.’” Acts 10:34-36

1. God gives the message to Cornelius to go to Joppa to get Peter. Cornelius was in prayer around three o'clock in the afternoon.

“Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter.” Acts 10:5

2. God appears to Peter with a vision to free him from the barrier that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The barrier of the diet and ceremonial law of the Old Testament was now gone. No longer were food or people unclean! God gave the message three times and then sent three men to his door.

“But the voice spoke again: ‘Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.’ The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.” Acts 10:1

3. Peter welcomed the men into the home as guests and then had them stay overnight until they left the following day.

“Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, ‘Three men have come looking for you. Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don’t worry, for I have sent them.’” Acts 10:19-20

4. Peter went to the home of Cornelius and found a large gathering of people all waiting to hear his words. Peter begins to share his message of salvation to the Gentiles, but wasn't prepared for what happened next!

“The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too.” Acts 10:45

5. The Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles in the same way that He had fallen upon the Jews in Acts 2.

“Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” Acts 10:47

E. Points to ponder...

1. God heard the prayers of Cornelius and recognized his good works but that didn't save him. It didn't save him but it did start him on the pathway toward salvation. Good works will never save anyone! We can never add to our salvation, but they do follow salvation!
2. Cornelius took the first step to know God and God showed Himself to Cornelius to take the next step. If anyone will follow the truth that they have, God will bring all men to salvation.

“For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.” Romans 1:20

3. God appeared to Peter in a vision and prepared him for the three men who would appear at his door. God removed the racial barrier and instructed Peter to no longer see anyone as better than another. Is there prejudice in your heart or mind? God loves all men equally and we must, too!
4. Cornelius' faith had impacted a large number of people who were awaiting Peter's arrival. How far is your witness reaching the people in your world?
5. Peter was now ready to break the racial barrier between Jews and Gentiles and said that he should not call anyone unclean. Let God reveal prejudice in your life and seek to allow the Holy Spirit to replace that with love.
6. Peter's message about Jesus was the clear message that brought the Holy Spirit's presence to the room. We must keep focused on Jesus to bring His power to our lives!
7. God confirmed His presence by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Once again, the Holy Spirit brought unity to the early church. A direct result of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives is the sense of unity that is built. How can you build greater unity within the body of Christ? What steps can you take to build bridges to those who are not like yourself?

“Then Peter replied, 'I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.'” Acts 10:34-36

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