

The Holy Spirit – 4 – Conversion of Cornelius and his household:-

Read Acts chapter 10 verses 1 – 48. The apostle Peter was preaching and teaching in the area around Lydda and Joppa on the sea coast to the north-west of Samaria. Note that he was staying in the house of “*one Simon, a tanner.*” Chapter 9, verse 43. The trade of tanning – handling dead bodies was regarded as unclean by orthodox Jews. Peter would be regarded as breaking the law by lodging in an ‘unclean’ house.

Acts chapter 10, verses 1 – 8:- Cornelius was in a position of some authority in one of the elite ‘regiments’ of the Roman army. Caesarea was the headquarters of the Roman governor of Judea. Cornelius was a ‘God-fearer’. Not a full convert to Judaism but a follower of its customs and its practices. The “*ninth hour of the day*” was one of the traditional hours for prayer (see also verse 30). The direct intervention of “*an angel of God*” brings a message to send for Simon Peter. We need to recognise that in the act of ‘conversion’, the Holy Spirit uses human beings. The ministry of Peter with the message of the Gospel was the means of the conversion of Cornelius and his household! The angel was necessary to draw the two men together so that Cornelius could hear the Gospel.

Verses 9 – 16:- Remember that Peter was in the house of Simon the tanner! He was already on the fringe of ‘unclean’ society! Having been past a tannery the smell is something awful! Maybe the house was well away from the place of work! Peter pleads his status as a law abiding Jew but is reminded that God is sovereign – verse 15.

Verses 17 – 33:- Peter does not understand what the vision means – verses 17 and 19. It was the Holy Spirit who had brought the messengers to the house and now gives a direct order to Peter – verses 19 – 20. Again we see that the work of the Holy Spirit is to enable the proclamation of the Gospel. That proclamation however depends on the obedience of human believers, in this case Peter.

Verses 34 - 43:- Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and human obedience to messages given, the scene is set for the proclamation of the “*good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)*” - verse 36. In verses 36 and 37 “*the word*” (in some versions “*the message*”) could be read as having a capital letter “*the Word*”! The Lord Jesus Christ came first “*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” - Matthew chapter 10 verse 6. In these verses in Acts we have a record of the Gospel reaching out to the Gentiles - “*Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)*” a fulfilment of the last words of the Lord Jesus at his ascension – Acts chapter 1, verse 8. Notice that the promise is “*that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*”

Verses 44 – 48:- The promise given in Peter’s speech on the Day of Pentecost was “*be baptised . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” (Acts chapter 2, verse 38). The household of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit **before** they were baptised! What a witness to Peter himself and the Jewish believers who had accompanied him from Joppa. - verses 23 and 43.

Up to that time the believers had been converts from Judaism. From now on the Lord, through the work of his Holy Spirit, drew men and women from all nations, kindred and tongues into the fellowship of his Church.