

Outline

1. Cornelius
 1. Described
 1. Centurion
 2. Devout and God-fearing
 2. Angel instructs him to send for Peter
2. Peter's vision
 1. Instructed to "kill and eat" unclean foods
 2. Peter objects and is told not to call "unclean" things God has declared clean
 3. Repeated two more times (for a total of three)
3. Peter leaves with delegation
4. Preaching to a Gentile
 1. Cornelius has his relatives and close friends with him
 2. Peter asks why he was brought
 3. Cornelius describes his vision
 4. Peter declares to Cornelius
 1. What Cornelius knew already (Acts 10:37)
 2. What Peter had seen (Acts 10:39)
 3. The resurrection of Jesus
5. The action of the Holy Spirit
 1. Those who heard began to speak in tongues and glorify God
 2. Peter asks the delegation what would hinder these Gentiles from being baptized
5. Cornelius and those with him are baptized

Commentary

It seems likely that Cornelius was not a proselyte. If he was a believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at all, he would have been a "proselyte of the gate":



The distinction between “proselytes of the gate” (Ex. 20:10) and “proselytes of righteousness” originated only with the rabbis. According to them, the “proselytes of the gate” (half proselytes) were not required to be circumcised nor to comply with the Mosaic ceremonial law. They were bound only to conform to the so-called seven precepts of Noah, viz., to abstain from idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, uncleanness, the eating of blood, theft, and to yield obedience to the authorities. Besides these laws, however, they were required to abstain from work on the Sabbath, and to refrain from the use of leavened bread during the time of the Passover. (Easton)

This would at least partially explain Peter’s reference to him as a “Gentile.” Additionally, it would help to explain why Peter would later indicate that Cornelius should have some knowledge of the things which had taken place in Judea (Acts 10:37).

It seems significant that Cornelius would take the time to explain things to those sent to retrieve Peter (Acts 10:8). Perhaps it was to better equip them to convince Peter to return with them, should he put up any resistance.

Of greater significance is the lack of delay. Cornelius called his people together as soon as the angel departed and sent them to Joppa.

Peter’s vision is sent in preparation for the salvation of those outside of Israel. When coupled with Peter’s introductory statement in Acts 10:28, we get a greater idea of how Jews truly viewed Gentiles.

Acts 11:12 tells us that there were six men who accompanied Peter on this trip.

Peter’s lesson is one of simplicity. It begins with things that were known to the hearer and expands to new things that the hearers needed to learn. Paul’s sermon on Mars’ Hill in Acts

16 is much the same.

It is of great significance that Peter orders these people to be baptized. In this incident, we can see the significance that Peter and the others attach to baptism. The sign which they saw now indicates to them the necessity of the next step. This is perhaps the only time in which a miracle is performed in order to confirm something to those who already believe rather than to confirm the word to those who were in need of salvation.

Thought Questions

Consider the following thought questions:

1. Why is it important for us to consider Cornelius' need to send for Peter?
2. Why does Peter not immediately grasp the significance of his vision (Acts 10:17)? At what point do you think that he does understand?
3. Why do some of the brethren accompany Peter to Caesarea?
4. Why had Cornelius called together his relatives and close friends (Acts 10:24)?
5. Why were Peter's companions astonished in Acts 10:45?