

## New Testament Conversions – No. 6

### The Conversion of Cornelius

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Cornelius is introduced to us as a man of rank in the Roman army and resident of the city of Caesarea (Acts 10:1). He was an unusually spiritual man, described as God-fearing, devoted to God, generous with his wealth, and prayerful (Acts 10:2). Despite such admirable traits, he was not saved, not a Christian (Acts 10:5; 22:13–14). Here we have another case in which a preacher and sinner are brought together by miraculous means, but in which, as in all others, the sinner is told what to do by another man, rather than by an angel, by Jesus, or by the Holy Spirit directly (Acts 10:5, 19–20; 11:12–14). When Peter arrived at Cornelius' house, he found that his host had gathered many people to hear him speak (Acts 10:24). This group was anxiously waiting to hear what the Lord had commanded Peter to say (Acts 10:33).

Peter preached to them about the death and resurrection of Christ, telling them that those who believe on Him would receive remission of sins (Acts 10:34–43). Peter's sermon was interrupted as the crowd who heard him was baptized in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues (Acts 10:44–46; 11:15–16). Peter then commanded the people to be baptized in water upon the authority of Jesus (Acts 10:47–48).

Please observe:

1. Peter does not teach salvation by "faith only" to Cornelius. He does teach that every one who believes on Christ shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43), but that is vastly different from "faith only." If he is teaching salvation by faith only here, he was unfaithful to what Christ told him to preach, namely, that one must believe **and** be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16). If he teaches here that remission of sins is granted at the moment of one's faith, he contradicts what he told the people on Pentecost. There he told believers by the authority of Christ that remission of sins came after baptism (Acts 2:38). Further, if two different groups of people are promised remission of sins on conflicting conditions by an inspired apostle, such makes God a respecter of persons, which Peter plainly says He is not (Acts 10:34–35). The conclusion is irresistible that Peter uses the term "believeth," not of mere momentary acceptance of Christ as the Son of God, but of one's full **compliance** with Christ's plan of pardon, which has belief or faith at its root. This same meaning of "believeth," occurs in John 3:16.
2. These people were not saved by the Holy Spirit baptism. The only two cases of this dramatic phenomenon in the New Testament are this one and that in which the apostles were so overwhelmed on Pentecost (Acts 2:38; 11:15–16). In neither case did it pertain to the

salvation of those upon whom it came. In neither case was it administered by human agents, but it came from the Lord directly. In this case, its purpose was to convince the prejudiced Jews that Cornelius, a Gentile, and thus all Gentiles, were to have the saving Gospel preached to them, and were as acceptable to God as the Jews upon obedience to it (Acts 10:34–35; 47; 11:15–18).

3. Cornelius and those with him were commanded to be baptized in water “in the name of Jesus Christ” (by the authority of Christ) (Acts 10:47). This is the same baptism commanded by Peter on Pentecost, which was “for remission of sins” and was likewise commanded “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38). Peter was fulfilling the Lord’s command to preach the Gospel so that those who believe and are baptized could be saved (Mark 16:16). It is thus apparent that these people were required to do the very same things in order to be saved that all others were required to do by New Testament preachers after Christ died.

These are yet the requirements of a perfectly just God in whom there is no respect of persons.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the “Bible Thoughts” Column for the *Hood County News*, Granbury, Texas, September 24, 1978.]

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