

## 30 AMAZING BIBLE STORIES YOU MAY NOT KNOW

### #24 | Peter Goes to Cornelius: The Real Story

#### WHAT THEY TOLD YOU IT MEANT

- GotQuestions:
  - “it was in Cornelius’s household that God publicly opened the doors of the church to the Gentile world.”
  - Peter “preached the gospel to everyone gathered in Cornelius’s house”
  - “ In considering the story of Cornelius in the Bible, it is important to note that being religious is not enough to save a person. Cornelius was as devout as they come, and he worshiped the one true God. Yet he still needed to hear the gospel and respond to it positively. That’s why God sent Peter, so that Cornelius could hear of the death and resurrection of Christ, which Peter clearly preached.”
  - “The story of Cornelius not only shows the necessity of the gospel but it indicates that God will move heaven and earth to bring the gospel to those who are ready to receive it.”
- The problem with this message is that it has assumed the following:
  - The church was born at Pentecost, or some time previous.
  - The church was born as a Jewish group, and later Gentiles were allowed in.
  - The Gospel is found in Acts 10.
- The *Got Questions* interpretation is the “standard evangelical interpretation.” But is it right?

#### EXAMINING THE TEXT | ACTS 10:1-48

- Verses 1-8 – Introducing Cornelius.
  - A man who feared God, gave financially to the Jewish nation, and prayed always (v. 2). However, he was not a Jew nor a proselyte, nor a Christian.
  - He was instructed by vision to send men to Peter, who would **tell thee what thou oughtest to do** (v. 6).
- Verses 9-16 – Peter receives his vision.
  - It is important to remember that this took place about 8 years *after* Pentecost (ca. 41AD).
  - Peter would not eat unkosher food (v. 14). If the church (under grace) began eight years early, why was Peter living under law?
  - When did God declare these foods to be clean? We cannot know for sure, but this is the first time in 1500 years (since Moses) that such freedom was allowed by God.
- Verses 17-23 – Peter meets with Cornelius’ men
  - This was a *new thing*, even Peter unsure about what was happening (v. 17). Clearly this was not “status quo” for the past eight years.
  - Notice that Peter seems obedient, but perplexed. His mind seems to be saying, “Why am I here?”

- If *the church* started in Acts 2, Peter would have been clear. If *the kingdom* was the message of Peter, then *why am I here?* Is a good question.
- Verses 24-33 – The Encounter at Caesarea
  - Peter’s main question: *why am I here?* -v. 29
- Verses 34-43 – Peter’s address at Caesarea
  - The word **perceive** was to *fully grasp*. The truth that **God is no respecter of persons** (v. 34) was *nothing new*, as can be testified from several Old Testament references (think Naaman, or Jonah).
  - Verse 35 is the only “gospel” spoken in the entire passage, and it *is not even close to the Gospel we preach today*. How then could Cornelius, accepting the message of v. 35, be *the first Gentile Christian* (as is commonly taught)?
  - Verses 36-37 are “plain as day” in teaching that Peter was *not* preaching the *dispensation of the age of grace* but rather the Gospel of the Kingdom, as preached to Israel and by John the Baptist.
  - Isn’t verse 43 proof that Peter speaks the Grace gospel of the church?
    - He speaks that which **all prophets** gave **witness**. How does this align with Colossians 1:26 (or Eph. 3:5, etc.)?
    - The Old Testament prophets certainly taught that Messiah (when He comes) would give **remission of sins** to **whosoever believeth**. However, believing in Jesus *as Messiah* also involved being obedient to Jewish Law (for which the Bible overflows in testimony). Under grace, our salvation is not by **remission of sins**, for God is not even counting our sins against us (2 Cor. 5:19). And our salvation certainly isn’t dependent upon *fearing God* and *working righteousness* (v. 35), but is *by grace through faith not of works* (Eph. 2:8-9).
- Verses 44-48 – The Holy Ghost Comes
  - The Holy Ghost had come to the 12 (Acts 2:4), to the Jewish believers (Acts 4:31), to the Samaritans (Acts 8:17) and now to the Gentiles.
  - The indwelling of the Spirit was not the “birth of the church” but the prophesied (Joel 2:28) empowerment for kingdom proclamation.
  - Peter then **commanded them to be baptized** (v. 48). This is because Baptism was totally required for the acceptance of the Kingdom message.

#### WHAT WE CAN LEARN

- We should *question the assumptions* about our standard interpretations of Scripture.
- That *the birth of the church* as we know it in Acts 2 is not a tenable position when compared with Scripture.
- That you and I are under the instructions of *the church as the body of Christ* and not *the church as the believing Jews and their companions*, thus our application comes from different parts of scripture.