

The Sound of *Many Waters*

Many Waters is a weekly article written by Ron Cipic, lead pastor of Grand River Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. To comment or ask a question about this piece, write to Pastor Ron at pastors@grandriverchurch.org. Related Scripture verses for further study are cited at the end of this piece.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Sometime after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, an angel appeared to a Roman centurion named Cornelius. The angel told him to send some men for a man named Peter staying in a town called Joppa. So Cornelius obeyed the heavenly messenger and sent his men to get the great apostle. Just before these men arrived at the home where Peter was staying, Peter "fell into a trance." In this heavenly vision, he heard a voice telling him: "What God has cleansed you must not call common." While Peter wondered what this all meant, Cornelius' men arrived and the Holy Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." So Peter obeyed the Spirit.

When Peter arrived at Cornelius' house, he said to Cornelius and his household: "You know how unlawful it is for Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Cornelius explained to Peter how he had a visitation from God that had led him to send for Peter. Cornelius said, "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

So Peter opened his mouth and preached the death, resurrection, and eternal Lordship of Jesus Christ to Cornelius and his

household. As he was speaking these very words --"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." -- the Holy Spirit "fell upon all those who heard the word." The Jewish believers were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles also. These new Gentile believers spoke with tongues and magnified God just as the Jewish believers had first done at Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit didn't give Cornelius and his household time to pray a "sinner's prayer." He didn't follow the three-point, pentecostal formula for conversion first outlined by Peter in his great sermon at Pentecost: (1) Repent, (2) Be baptized in the name of the Jesus Christ, and (3) Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit didn't give Cornelius or any of the converts a chance to say anything. They didn't ask for Him. He just fell on them. Only afterwards were they water baptized. The point is, God did it from A to Z, His way. He set up the divine appointment by sending an angel to Cornelius. He visited Peter in a vision and told Peter what to do. Then He showed up at Cornelius' house and took over the meeting. And a bunch of people got saved that day.

This account which is found in chapter ten of Acts is an amazing testimony to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some call this book "The Acts of the Apostles," but it is really "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." He is God's agent in the earth. Like Peter, our role is to simply hear His voice and obey his promptings. He'll do the rest. *RC*

Study Verses: Acts 1:1-8; 2:4; 2:17-21; 2:33; 4:8; 4:31; 5:3; 5:32; 6:3-5; 6:10; 7:51; 7:55; 8:14-20; 8:39; 9:17; 9:31; 10:19-20; 10:38; 10:44-47; 11:12; 11:15-17; 11:28; 13:2-4; 13:52; 15:8; 15:28; 16:6-7; 18:5; 19:2; 19:6; 19:21; 20:23; 20:28; 21:4; 21:11; and 28:25.

April 20, 2007