

Why Did Cornelius and the Gentiles Speak in Tongues? Acts 10

Introduction:

1. Acts 10 tells the story of a Gentile man by the name of Cornelius who, along with his entire household, trusts Christ.
2. This is a very significant event in God's Word and will provide a bridge from the apostle Peter to the apostle Paul. It will also provide a bridge from God's kingdom program for the nation of Israel to the dispensation of grace today.
 - Paul is sent home to Tarsus in Acts 9:30, but then shows up again in Acts 11:25.
 - Peter dominates the early part of Acts. Acts 1-12
 - Paul dominates the middle and latter part of Acts. Acts 13-28
 - Wedged in between the time that Paul was sent home and the time he showed up again is this event that involves Peter and Cornelius.
3. God knew that the apostle Paul would be the apostle to the Gentiles, but the church at Jerusalem would never have accepted this change in program if initiated by Paul.
4. God used Peter to open the door for Paul's great ministry to the Gentiles. This is why this is such a significant event in the Bible. We examined this story on the surface in a previous message.
5. It is so crucial to our understanding of God's Word that we need to delve into this text a bit deeper and answer several key questions.

First, was Cornelius a lost Gentile or a saved Jewish proselyte?

Second, did Peter understand the revelation of the mystery and dispensation of grace when he went to meet Cornelius?

Third, was it because of Peter's rebellion and disobedience that he did not want to go to Cornelius house?

Fourth, why was Peter so vehemently opposed to eating the meats that God told him to eat?

Fifth, why did Peter consider it unlawful for him to keep company with Gentiles?

Sixth, did Peter continue to reach out and evangelize Gentiles after this event?

Seventh, why did God interrupt Peter's sermon to Cornelius?

Eighth, why did the Gentiles speak in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit?

1. What was the gift of tongues in the Bible?
 - It was the supernatural ability to speak in a language that had never been learned. It was an unknown tongue to the speaker. Acts 2:5-8, 11
 - The word "tongue" means "language." The gift of tongues was not the ability to speak in a string of gibberish. There is nothing supernatural about this. This profits nobody and can easily be faked or simply learned.
2. How many times do we see the gift of tongues exercised in God's Word?
 - There are only three instances in the entire Word of God where the gift of tongues is actually exercised.
 - The three instances are Acts 2, 10, and 19.
 - With the exception of the book of 1 Corinthians, the gift of tongues is never referred to in any of the epistles of Paul.
3. What was the purpose of the gift of tongues?
 - God sheds great light on the purpose of the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:22. It clearly states, "*Wherefore tongues are **for a sign**, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not...*"
4. One thing is clear. The gift of tongues was a sign to unbelievers. In the context (vs. 21), it is obvious that Paul had unbelieving Israel in mind. When we cross-reference with 1:22, we find that "*The **Jews** require a sign...*"
 - The nation of Israel was born through the use of miraculous signs. Exodus 4:30-31
 - Because of their stubbornness and unbelief, God has always dealt with Israel through the use of miraculous signs. Psalm 74:9
 - In the Old Testament, strange tongues were a sign to Israel of impending judgment. Isaiah 28:11-12; Jeremiah 5:15; Deuteronomy 28:15-68
5. The Bible is clear. Tongues are **for a sign**. The Jews **require** a sign.
6. To put it simply, the gift of tongues was a sign to Israel in the book of Acts.
 - The gift was never given as a means of personal edification (heavenly prayer language). It was a gift used to get God's truth out and to be a sign to Israel.
 - Tongues are never spoken - or even mentioned - outside of the Acts time period, because Israel's program was set aside in Acts 28:26-28. 1 Corinthians was written during the book of Acts.
7. How does the story of Peter and Cornelius fit in with all of this teaching about tongues?
 - When the apostles were filled with the Spirit in Acts 2, they immediately spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4-8). This was a miraculous sign to Israel that authenticated the apostles' message and the fact that they were filled with God's Spirit.
 - When Cornelius and his entire house of Gentiles believed Peter's message, God immediately gave those Gentiles the Holy Spirit. But how would Peter know this?

- God gave these Gentiles the same gift that He gave to Peter and the twelve on the day of Pentecost – the gift of tongues. Being a Roman soldier, he would have known Latin, and maybe Greek. Peter and the other Jews recognized it, so it may have been Aramaic or Hebrew.
 - This was an outward, visible, miraculous sign to Peter and the other Jews with Peter that these Gentiles had, in fact, truly received God’s Spirit. There was no denying it. 10:44-46
 - When Peter had to give an account to his Jewish brethren at Jerusalem, it was the sign gift of tongues that kept Peter out of hot water. 11:15-18
8. Tongues were for a sign. The Jews require a sign. This would explain why we never see tongues spoken unless there were Jews present.
 9. There are those who would like to take this story and try to make it the standard for every person that gets saved, but this is quite ludicrous.
 10. This was a unique, one-of-a-kind event. These Gentiles spoke in tongues to outwardly demonstrate to Peter and all the believing Jews that God had, in fact, given His Holy Spirit to these Gentiles by faith alone. This was a groundbreaking event that would require a miraculous sign to convince the Jews of its validity.
 11. This event would be crucial for the future of the church and for Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. At the Jerusalem Council, it was this event that Peter would refer back to in demonstrating that the Gentiles do not have to keep the Jewish law to be saved, and that Gentiles should be included in the church by grace through faith alone. 15:7-11