

This week we are going to look at one of the most controversial figures in the book of Acts, Cornelius. Almost everybody breaks their necks trying to explain what is happening in Acts 10 & 11, and it can be very confusing.

We are going to listen to a man that I really appreciate, Dr. George Antonios. \* He is not an Acts 2 dispensationalist, but calls himself a Ruckmanite dispensationalist. He believes the body of Christ began after Acts 2, but before the salvation of Saul. This is different than Ruckman believed, as far as I know. As we saw at the end of last weeks lesson, Ruckman believed the body of Christ began in Acts 2, but nobody knew about it until Paul revealed it.

This man believes that Ruckman was wrong about Acts 2, but was right that the body of Christ began before Paul, but wasn't revealed until Paul revealed it.

I appreciate him because he is very kind and open to others' arguments. He admits that he has learned things from hyperdispensationalists, and he believes that we shouldn't always be separating and not fellowshiping with each other even if we don't totally agree on different nuances of doctrine.

In the video we're going to look at, he is disputing David O'Steen's view that Cornelius was not saved into the body of Christ.

\* Video

Doctor George is exactly right on this point. Mr. O'Steen does contradict himself. He does that by using an unscriptural and made-up term: prophecy program (and mystery program). You will not find the word 'program' in the KJV. When you turn what God is doing into a program instead of a dispensation, you will make problems for yourself when trying to understand God's Word.

Now, while Dr. George was correct about the contradiction, the conclusion he draws makes a huge assumption because he also adopts the false phrases "prophecy program and mystery program."

\* Video

Peter was confused because it wasn't supposed to happen that way. And, according to both of these men, it has to be either 'prophecy program' or 'mystery program.' But here is the problem with that assumption.

In Matthew 13, Jesus speaks a series of parables to the multitudes.

**Matt 13:10-11** And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? **11** He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know **the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given.

What is Jesus speaking to the multitude and revealing to his disciples? Mysteries.

Would this be about the so-called 'prophecy program' or 'mystery program.' Prophecy.

Look in **2Tim 3:1 ¶** This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

What is Paul doing here? Giving a prophecy.

Again, would this be about the so-called 'prophecy program' or 'mystery program.' Mystery.

It can cause much confusion by describing dispensational distinctions in non-scriptural phraseology. Mysteries were revealed in prophetic scriptures, and prophecy was given by the one who was given the revelation of the mystery.

Now before we continue, I want to point out another assumption that is made by almost everyone concerning what is happening in Acts 10. I will give my opinion, and if it can be refuted by scripture, I am open to hearing it. \*

What is happening in Acts 10 isn't about the personal, eternal soul salvation of Cornelius. Now, immediately, if you are well versed in scripture, you will say: WRONG! Look at Acts 11:14.

**Acts 11:13-14** And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; **14** Who shall tell thee words, whereby **thou and all thy house shall be saved.**

Some of you may recall a series I did last year on difficult verses. In that series we spent an entire lesson going over the word salvation and saved, and how they are used in scripture. If you assume every time you see one of those words it is speaking of eternal, personal soul salvation, you will become very confused. Just one example will suffice:

**1Cor 15:1-2** ¶ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **2** By which **also** ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

- When we looked at this verse, we saw that in verse one they have received the gospel and are standing in the gospel. They already have personal, eternal soul salvation.
- In verse 2 he says: 'By which ALSO ye are saved.' They already have received and are standing in the gospel, but the gospel will ALSO save them. It will save them from the bad doctrine about the resurrection that he is about to explain.

Going back now to Acts, let's look at Cornelius and see if the salvation that Peter is describing is the personal soul salvation that most folks assume.

**Acts 10:1-2** ¶ There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, **2** A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

In both the dispensation of the law and the dispensation of the kingdom, how does one receive personal soul salvation? \*

By doing exactly what Cornelius with all his house were doing. You make the God of Israel your God and you subject yourself to the nation. This is what Cornelius and his house were doing.

Now let's look at exactly what Cornelius was told:

**Acts 10:3-6** He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. **4** And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. **5** And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter: **6** He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: **he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.**

The angel doesn't say he will tell you what you need to believe, he says he'll tell you what you ought to do. What did Cornelius and his house already believe? Listen to what Peter says to Cornelius and his house:

**Acts 10:35-43** But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. **36** The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) **37** **That word, I say, ye know,**

- That word – ye know. Not just Cornelius, but ye – everyone listening. What did they know?

which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; **38** How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and

healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. **39** And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

- Now Peter gives them information which they didn't know.

**40** Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; **41** Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. **42** And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. **43** To him give all the prophets witness, **that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.**

- This is what these Gentiles learned. Whosoever believes on Jesus' name will be saved. They then believed that Jesus was Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. That is what believing on his name means – that he is who he said he is.
- It is the same thing Peter preached to the leaders of Israel in **Acts 4:12** Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

God knows their hearts, and seeing their belief of this: their fear of God and new understanding of God in the flesh, pours out the Holy Ghost on them. Now, what does Peter tell them **to do**? (Remember, the angel tells Cornelius that Peter would tell them what to do.)

**Acts 10:47-48** Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? **48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.** Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Now Peter commands them – tells them what to do – be baptized in the name of the Lord. This endows them with a new salvation, not of their souls, but of their place in the kingdom.

This is illustrated by Jesus Christ when he deals with another saved Gentile centurion.

**Luke 7:2-9** And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. **3** And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. **4** And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, **That he was worthy for whom he should do this: 5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.** **6** Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: **7** Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. **8** For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. **9** When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, **I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.**

- So here we have a centurion like Cornelius of great faith, he loves the nation and he even built them a house of worship. The similarities are not co-incidental in my opinion.
- Now let's see what else Jesus tells this centurion that isn't recorded in Luke.

**Matt 8:10-12** When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, **I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.** **11** And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. **12** But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

After the Holy Spirit falls upon these people, Peter commands that they be baptized. What is the purpose of that baptism? It is identifying these Gentiles with the saved remnant of Israel. It is giving them the same seat in the

kingdom of heaven as the believing Jews, just as Christ said concerning the centurion Gentile of great faith in Matt. 8.

\* Now to understand this, look at this map. Sometimes when we reference the kingdom, we think of the entire planet under the jurisdiction of Jesus Christ, and that is true, it will be. But the seat of kingdom itself will be approximately where you see that black square. It is the land promised to Abraham Isaac and Jacob. Nothing unclean will be permitted to enter that area.

**Isa 35:4-10** Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you. **5** ¶ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. **6** Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. **7** And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes. **8** And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. **9** No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: **10** And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Even wayfaring fools will not err therein. You have to be clean to enter. You have to be cleansed if you are not clean.

Now for those believing Jews, whose inheritance it is, this is how they are cleansed to enter and dwell there:

**Eze 36:24-27** For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. **25** ¶ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. **26** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

Now, for Israel, you see the progression: First comes the sprinkling of water, then comes the new spirit. In the book of Acts, no one is baptized with the Holy Ghost before being water baptized with the exception of Cornelius and his house. They received the gift of the Holy Ghost (the baptism with the Holy Spirit) before they were water baptized.

I think this is important and we'll get to it in a moment.

First, let's again go back to Acts 10 and look at what the angel tells Cornelius:

**Acts 10:4** And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

**Acts 10:30-31** And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, **31** And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. \*

What is God remembering? What memorial is Cornelius' alms and prayers before God that he would pour out His Spirit on Gentiles as he did the believing remnant?

In the book of Malachi, God tells Israel something about those who fear Him and think on His name.

**Mal 3:16-18** Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. **17** And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and

I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. **18** Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

We already saw in Matthew 8 that Christ says many will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Sitting down with them isn't just pulling up a chair beside them, it is taking a place with them. It is having residence in the land that was given them as an inheritance. \* Christ says this right after he says that the centurion had greater faith than anyone in Israel. The implication being that the Gentile centurion would gain inheritance with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

It is my opinion that the centurion was written in the book of remembrance described in Malachi. That book was written specifically for Israelites who feared God and thought on His name, but Christ said that Gentiles would also gain inheritance in the nation.

I would submit that the salvation that is given to Cornelius and his house is salvation into the inheritance of Israel, and he will have a seat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom.

When Jesus talks about the judgment of the sheep and goat nations in Matthew 25, those nations that are saved into the kingdom aren't saved into the land promised to Israel. They are saved back into their nations. They will have the obligation to come up to the land once a year for the feast of tabernacles. These are the nations that Israel, as a kingdom of priests, will go out and teach.

So now, let's just look at one more thing. Why did the Holy Ghost fall on these Gentiles before they had the ceremonial cleansing of water baptism?

In Acts 10, did God know that He was going to separate out Barnabas and Saul? Did God know He was going to change Saul's name to Paul and reveal to him the dispensation of the grace of God along with a different message of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles?

Did Peter, the apostle of the circumcision know that?

If Paul and Barnabas had gone off and preached what they did without any kind of revelation to the believing remnant of Israel, do you think that they would have accepted that?

So when the issue of whether the Gentiles needed to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses came up, what did Peter understand?

**Acts 15:6-11 ¶** And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. **7** And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. **8** And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. **10** Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? **11** But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ **we shall be saved, even as they.**

Peter, who now understands Paul's message, settles the matter because he was sent to Cornelius. The message of Acts 10 & 11 is that God is preparing the believing remnant of Jewish believers that things are going to change. It is that there is going to be a deviation from revealed prophecy, and Gentiles are going to be a part of that deviation.

Finally, look at the change from verse 8 to verse 11. In verse 8, what God was doing with the Gentiles was 'even as he did us.' Gentiles were receiving what the believing Jews already had.

Now, in verse 11, Jews had to receive the same salvation as the Gentiles. In verse 8, there is a middle wall of partition; in verse 11, that middle wall is gone.

2:06 – This is where we’ll pick it up next week. \*