

IT IS SETTLED!

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)

By Howell Lasseter

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

Our study today introduces the conversion of Cornelius to Christ. This case of conversion is one of the three most misunderstood in the entire New Testament. The first of these three would be the thief on the cross, who, incidentally, died **before** the New Testament law - the law to which mankind is now subject - came into effect. The second misunderstood case is that of Saul of Tarsus, the subject of our study last week. To briefly review, Saul, in his own words, tells us that, after 3 days of fasting and prayer, his sins remained; Ananias, the preacher approved by God, told him to *"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). We will see, as we consider the conversion of Cornelius, there are similarities to Saul's conversion.

To understand the importance of this event, we need to look carefully at two verses. In Acts 10:28, Peter tells Cornelius: *"Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation: But **God shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.**"* Acts 10:45 tells us *"and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."*

How, you ask, does this compare with Saul's conversion? Let us go back to Acts 9:4-6: *"And he (Saul) fell to the earth, and he heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."* In the case of Saul's conversion, he is not the only one to whom divine instructions are given. Acts 9:10-16 tells us a disciple of the Lord, Ananias, was told to go to Saul and tell him what he must do. Verses 17 & 18 record that meeting, at which time Saul was baptized.

In the conversion of Cornelius, Peter is instructed to go to Cornelius, as Ananias was told to go to Saul. Cornelius was instructed to send for Peter, so Peter could tell him what he was to do (Acts 10:1-6), as Saul was told to go into the city where he would be told what to do (Acts 9:6). As Saul was told to *"...be baptized,"* so Cornelius and those with him were commanded to be baptized (Acts 10:47,48).

Nowhere does the New Testament teach that baptism is "an outward sign of an inward grace." The New Testament does teach, however, that baptism is a command, given by the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). From that time on, it was, and is, necessary that, after being taught, one is baptized. In our study of the New Testament accounts of conversion given after Jesus' commands noted above, there will be found **no** record of any person saved by seeing a vision. Every account shows the sinner being taught the Word of God, and obeying Jesus' commands, including His command to be baptized. Won't **you** believe God's Word and obey the commands it teaches us?