

First Gentile Believers ~ Part 6 Cornelius, His Family, and Guests Are Baptized

In my last post, we learned that **Cornelius Shares His Vision with Kefa, and Kefa Preached the Gospel**. In this post, we learn that **Cornelius, His Family, and Guests Are Baptized**.

⁴⁴ Kefa was still saying these things when the Ruach HaKodesh fell on all who were hearing the message. ⁴⁵ All the believers from the Circumcision faction who had accompanied Kefa were amazed that the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh was also being poured out ⁴⁶ on the Goyim, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Kefa's response was, ⁴⁷ "Is anyone prepared to prohibit these people from being immersed in water? After all, they have received the Ruach HaKodesh, just as we did." ⁴⁸ And he ordered that they be immersed in the name of Yeshua, the Messiah. Then they asked Kefa to stay on with them for a few days. ~ Acta 10:44-48 (CJB)

Had **Kefa** and company not seen for themselves that the **Ruach HaKodesh** came on these non-**Jews** precisely as, on themselves, they would not have *immersed* them with the manifestation of speaking in other languages. As with **Kefa** (vv. 9–29), it took a supernatural act of **God** to dislodge their resistance to bringing **Gentiles** into the **Body of the Messiah**, accomplished and symbolized by immersion. **Cornelius**, his family, and his friends were the first **Gentiles** to enter the **Messianic Community** without becoming **Jews** first.

This was highly reminiscent of the **Ethiopian eunuch's** request for **baptism** (Acts 8:36). As with the **eunuch**, there was now no barrier, no way anyone could hinder the **baptism** of these Gentiles and their full inclusion into the **Messianic Community**.

Verse 45 presents an interesting phrase that may have snuck by us, *the believers from the Circumcision faction*, or, more literally, *the believers from the Circumcision*, which could mean not a faction but all Jewish believers. Which is it? In his commentary on this passage, David Stern has this to say:

In Acts 15:5, 21:20; Galatians 2:12; and Titus 1:10, *the Circumcision Faction* refers to a subgroup of **Messianic Jews**, namely, those who insisted that **Gentiles** could not join the **Messianic Community** merely by trusting in **God** and His **Messiah Yeshua**; they had to become **Jewish** proselytes. This faction would have consisted of saved **Jews** who, in their former life as non-**Messianic Jews**, considered **God**-fearers fence-straddlers that ought to convert to **Judaism**. Faith in **Yeshua** would not have made them change their opinion because the possibility that **Gentiles** could be members of the **Messianic Community** without becoming **Jews** had never arisen.

But at Romans 4:9, 4:12, 15:8; Galatians 2:7–9 and Ephesians 2:11, *the Circumcision* is used merely to distinguish **Jews** from **Gentiles**.

Whether it means all **Messianic Jews** or the faction that wanted **Gentile Believers** to convert to **Judaism** is elucidated by what it was that bothered them. It is not reasonable to suppose that *all* **Messianic Jews**, or even a significant majority of them, would have both experienced amazement at **God's** giving the **Ruach HaKodesh** to **Gentiles** (this verse) *and* criticized **Kefa** for entering **Gentiles'** homes and eating with them (Acts 11:2–3). Only **Jews** (**Messianic** or non-**Messianic**) concerned with Gentiles would have had such reactions. Therefore, my rendering *of the Circumcision faction*.¹

In my next post, we follow **Kefa Back to Yerushalayim to Brief the other Emissaries**.

¹ Jewish New Testament Commentary.