
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Did Holy Spirit baptism save Cornelius in Acts 10?**

According to the NT, Holy Spirit baptism never saved anyone from their sins. Jesus promised Holy Spirit baptism to His apostles in Acts 1:4-8, but they were already saved. Rather than saving men from their sins, the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism was to confirm the gospel message spoken by the apostles (Mk 16:20). Since Holy Spirit baptism never saved anyone, it was possible for this phenomenon to pass away without anyone losing their salvation.

However, there is a case in which Holy Spirit baptism did appear to save someone from their sins – at least some people think this.

CORNELIUS AND HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

In Acts 10-11 we read of a man named Cornelius and his family who were baptized by the Holy Spirit. Notice:

Acts 10:44-46

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. ...

In the next chapter the apostle Peter explained to Jewish brethren why this baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred. Let us accept what Peter himself said about this. Let us not build a case and claim things which Peter himself never claimed. Notice:

Acts 11:13-18

13 "[Cornelius] told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter,
14 'who will tell you **words by which you and all your household will be saved.**'
15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.
16 "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
17 "If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"
18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

My friend, if you have your Bible opened, under line verse 14. The angel of God told Cornelius that Peter would come and preach **words** that would save him and his entire household. Think about this. If words saved Cornelius, then Holy Spirit baptism did not save him. It is foolish to think that Cornelius was saved first by words and then saved again by Holy Spirit baptism. The angel said words would be spoken and those words would save the family.

QUESTION: What words were spoken by Peter that resulted in Cornelius being saved from his sins? Listen carefully:

Acts 10:47-48

47 "[Then Peter answered] Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"
48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

The words which were spoken by Peter, that resulted in salvation, was the command to be baptized in water. No one should be surprised at this, because Jesus Himself said:

Mark 16:16

16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; ...

Acts 22:16

16 ... Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

We see, then, that Holy Spirit baptism did not save Cornelius. He was saved when he believed the gospel message and was baptized in water to have his sins washed away.

What did Holy Spirit baptism do for Cornelius if it didn't save him? If you will examine the passage carefully, you will see that Holy Spirit baptism was to convince the Jews that God would accept the Gentiles into His heavenly family. Peter asked:

Acts 10:47

47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

If Cornelius had not been baptized by the Holy Spirit, someone might have forbidden water. Someone might have forbidden these Gentiles from being baptized and becoming members of the church.

So you see, Holy Spirit baptism, in this case, was to convince the Jews that God would now allow Gentiles into the heavenly family – into the church of Jesus Christ. To put it in other words, Holy Spirit baptism and miracles was not to save anyone from their sins, but its purpose was to convince men who did not believe. It was proof from heaven that could be seen and heard. It was visible and audible proof that the gospel was from heaven, not from men.

Hebrews 2:3-4

3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,
4 **God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit,** according to His own will?

There are many examples of men who had the Holy Spirit come upon them miraculously, but it did not save them from sins.

- Num 24:2 – the Holy Spirit came upon Balaam and made him bless Israel, but Balaam was never saved.
- 1 Sam 19:23 – the Holy Spirit came upon King Saul and made him prophesy, but King Saul was not saved.
- Num 22:28 – the Holy Spirit came upon a donkey and made him speak, but the donkey was not saved.
- 1 Sam 6 – the Holy Spirit came upon some milk cows and forced them to walk to Israel, but the milk cows were never saved.

Holy Spirit baptism never saved anyone from their sins. Men were saved in the NT when they heard the words of the gospel and were baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Holy Spirit baptism does not even occur today. No one is baptized by the Holy Spirit today and no one today can work miracles. This all ceased when the gospel was completely revealed and confirmed (1 Cor 13:8-13). Because this is so, let us not make the mistake of looking for Holy Spirit baptism to come upon any of us. It was never meant for all people and it never saved anyone to begin with. Since it never saved anyone, it was able to pass away without anyone losing their salvation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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