THE UNITING OF JEWS AND GENTILES (2)

By Keith Greer

Acceptance of the Gentiles. It all began on Pentecost. In Acts 2:16, 17, Peter quoted from the prophet Joel whose prophecy was being fulfilled in their hearing. When Jesus gave His apostles the great commission, to whom did He tell them to go? "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." {Matthew 28:19} "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." {Luke 24:47} All people would find a common denominator in the man Jesus Christ.

Sometime after the church began on Pentecost, God called Peter to go to the house of a Gentile named Cornelius. Earlier, an angel had appeared to Cornelius telling him to send for Peter, and so he did. Consider what Peter said to Cornelius. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'" {Acts 10:34, 35} The Holy Spirit fell on them, just as it had fallen on those who heard Peter's first sermon on Pentecost. He preached words by which Cornelius and his household could be saved {Acts 11:14}; then he commanded them to be baptized. "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days." {Acts 10:47, 48} Later, when the Jews in Jerusalem questioned Peter, he said, "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? When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." {Acts 11:17,18}

Paul Goes to the Gentiles. In the Roman letter, Paul gave the correct order—"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." {Romans 1:16} But, after Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, the Lord told Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." {Acts 9:15} And after Paul returned from his first preaching trip, when he was in Jerusalem to discuss the Gentile problem, he said, "...Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." {Acts 15:7-9} He understood that God made no differences between the Jews and the Gentiles; both were eligible to obtain eternal salvation through Christ. "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." {Acts 15:11}

Both Need the Same Thing. "Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." {Romans 3:22-24} Christ's blood saves all men—not just the Jews—from their sins. Listen to Paul's words one more time, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for

you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." {Galatians 3:28,29} All people needed a remedy for their sins, and Christ's blood was that remedy. ALL who apply that blood to their sin-stained souls can be saved. God planned this before time began. God had predetermined to save ALL men through Christ! ***