

Acts 10:23-11:18 ACTS-[26]-PETER at CAESAREA

PRELIMS. The Holy Spirit has been at work. He has been 'at work' in Peter's life and heart – and He has been 'at work' in Cornelius' life and heart. God was revealing to His Church, that the Gentiles had to be brought into His kingdom. It wasn't a matter of race, colour, or past life it was a matter of **faith** in Jesus Christ for forgiveness. God was now to open up the floodgates of His grace to all classes of sinners!

The IDEAL 'SET-UP'

We have the ideal 'set-up' for any minister today! A house full of **expectant listeners!** Hungry to hear the Word! Even more than that – as soon as Peter came in, they *“fell at his feet in reverence”* [25]!! Where would you get such treatment today? You do actually in **India** and other countries an exalted place is given to the clergy! Even in our own country, up to 50yrs ago, the clergy had an important status in society – thus the numerous Bishops in the House of Lords

However, Peter **repudiates** such treatment! *“Peter made him get up...I am only a man myself”* [26]! So what we have in this passage is Peter rejecting **two extremes** regarding human dignity! He has rejected the idea that mankind in any condition is **unworthy of respect** (ie, is **unclean**'), and on the other hand, Peter has shown that man is not to be given the place of a god! We do not worship man as a Divine Being! Man is neither a **dog** nor a **god**! Fallen, yes! but still in God's Image!

Now the 'big' **question** among Xns is whether these people were believers in the Lord, (according to the 'light' that they had), and were already **saved/justified** as other OT believers, or just interested **seekers** after truth! Those who believe that they were believers did so, because there is no mention of **repentance** or conversion in Peter's address. It was **not** a **gospel** sermon for unbelievers, they say. And also that Peter says *“You know the message God sent to the people of Israel...telling the good news”* [36] and *“You know what has happened throughout Judea...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth...because God was with Him”* [37], etc! Now, if these people are right, then the main **purpose** of Peter's visit was **only** for the **baptism** of the **Spirit**!!

However, there are **problems** with this view. When Peter relates the

incident to the church in [11:14], he specifically says the Spirit told him he was to bring *“a message through which you (Cornelius) and your house will be saved”* (so they did need to be saved)!! And **also**, it could be said that the gospel **was preached** (depending on tenses etc) in [10:43] *“All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name”*!

Peter knew the situation he was addressing and I am certain every preacher to day would welcome such an audience! ***Just before we move on – **what is it** that makes people **interested** in religion? **Why were** people gathered to hear Peter at all? **Why are** people even today, interested in religion and **attend church**? It was God the **Holy Spirit!** He was working on their **minds!** *“I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds”* [Heb 10:13] Why? Because *“the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers”* [2C4:4]! Religion has to do with the mind – how people **think** is important. These people in Caesarea were thinkers about **reality** and knew there was a **purpose** and **goal** in life. And **God** was **leading** them.

Two important matters! If you are '**seeking**' the truth, and are confronted with the gospel – there is **good news** and there is **bad news!** The good news is that God **always** leads His people this way – to seek and search His Word! Every one of His children prayed, read, searched the Bible for help and confessed their **ignorance** and **sin** and **dependence** on God's **mercy!** So, if this is true of you, it is very likely that you are one of God's people that He is leading to Himself! The bad news, is that if you **reject** the Light He is showing you, and you turn away from the mercy He offers in Christ, you will be **more accountable** than ever before, and the punishment of your sins will be **greater** than those who never heard had the opportunity to believe!

PETER'S ADDRESS

Peter first explains **why** he, a Jew, is present among Gentiles! They, as we noted, knew some things about the Jewish faith. Eg, that *“it was against the law”* for Israelites *“to associate with Gentiles”* [28]! So why was Peter present now with them? Peter tells them that *“God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean”* [28] and

he was **invited** by Cornelius to come and speak to you! Cornelius takes over and tells of God's wonderful **guidance** to himself and Peter!

So Peter is given a 'free hand' to explain the whole gospel, and does so from the standpoint of his **own experience** "*I now realise how true it is that God...*" - God is the **subject** [34] Salvation is **God's work!** Peter is **humble** here and explains how God has **changed** him in **revealing** to him new things! Peter acknowledges he has changed his mind because God has been at work on him these past months!

Peter now explains that the **privileges** Israel enjoyed (God revealing things to them He hid from all other nations), He is now **about to reveal** to the whole world, to "*every nation*" [35] Where there are people genuinely searching for truth, those living in the fear of God and seeking to do what is right [35], will most certainly hear the good news of the gospel. "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness*" - not those who have the righteousness of Christ, but those who are searching for it! "*Seek and you will find*"! God is not calling anyone to **seek in vain** to be made a fool of!!

Peter says "*God has commanded us to preach to the people* (from all nations) *and to testify that He* (Jesus Christ) *is the One whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him* (Jesus Christ) *receives forgiveness of sins through His name*" [42]

God **accepts** all those who seek for Him, not just Jews, and He will now **reveal** Himself to them, whereas before God was **hidden** from other nations. This was the burden of Paul's ministry in **Athens**. God made **all nations** and "*determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him*" [17:26,27]. **APP** So where people, no matter where they live, "*reach out*" for God, God will make known the **gospel** to them – if they will have it!!

What Peter has done here, is to **introduce** them to Jesus Christ! From [36-41] Peter explains what Jesus did and how "*We are witnesses of everything He did*" [39]! And the **gospel** is therefore presented in [43] "*everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins*"!!

The Holy Spirit fell on them as Peter was preaching! That's what we want at every service! "*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message*" [44]. There was obviously a **convincing testimony** among these people gathered in Cornelius' house, because the converted Jews, "*circumcised believers*", were "*astonished*" that **God** would **bless** Gentiles "*that the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles*" [45] They **acknowledged** that it **was** the Holy Spirit! **Peter calls for **baptism** & there is no objections— how could there be - and **asked** Peter to stay!

SURPRISE, SURPRISE

Almost **invariably**, when there is a work of God, especially among the **unsaved**, there **will** be **objections** from some sections of the **Church!** Look at what happened to Peter when he went to **report** to the Church about the Mission! "*the circumcised believers criticised him*" [11:2].

Almost all **missionaries** will confirm the difficulties they have had from the **Church** regarding their work. **Armchair critics!** This is very 'testing' to called missionaries. Even Lord **Shaftesbury** (yes), objected to **William Booth's** Salvation Army saying it was the **Antichrist!** Some even said his name added up to '666'!!

However, it is right and proper that there should be some 'outside' body to **judge** the **reality** of a **call** from the **Lord**, from a candidate for Mission, and not just a wish and longing from an individual! Also for those **professing** to be **converted!** The Scriptures here show that just as there was an **oversight committee** regarding the inclusion of the **Samaritans**, by sending Peter and John [8:14], so when the **Gentiles** were included there had to be an **overseeing** what Peter had reported!

Luke **defines** the event "*the Gentiles also received the Word of God*" [2]. Peter = "*received the Holy Spirit*" [10:47] And there it is **Word and Spirit!** **APP** We need God's Spirit **and** we need God's Word. To have one without the other is to be **imbalanced!** To be all Spirit and **no wisdom** and **Truth** to **guide** the heart, is as bad as to be all Head knowledge full of the Word but **no heart** or **passion!** *There was "*no further objections*" in fact they "*praised God*" - and note **whose** work it was? "*God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life*" [18]!