

ACTS 10 & 11

PREJUDICE AND GOD'S HEART

THE PLAN OF GOD

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

—John 3.16

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

—Matthew 28.19

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

—Acts 1.8

10 YEARS LATER—

- ▶ **A. D. 30 - Day of Pentecost:** 10 days after the ascension of Jesus, the disciples are baptized with power in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; 15 ethnicities hear the gospel; 3000 people are baptized (Acts 2)
- ▶ **A. D. 35 - Philip in Samaria:** persecution scatters the believers; Philip, a Hellenic Jew, goes to Samaria and proclaims Christ; when the news gets back to Jerusalem, Peter and John go to Samaria and the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit; Philip, directed to go from Samaria toward Gaza, encounters an Ethiopian court official; Philip leads him to faith in Christ and baptizes him. Philip goes on to Caesarea (Acts 8)

10 YEARS LATER—

► A. D. 35 – 40

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 11.19-21

► A. D. 40 - An extraordinary event: by divine manipulation, an apostle realizes that salvation is also for the Gentile population!

HERE'S HOW IT HAPPENED—

- ▶ The apostle Peter has been traveling around the country and is at Joppa, staying with a tanner named Simon. Joppa is about 33 miles from Jerusalem.
- ▶ Meanwhile, 33 miles to the north at Caesarea, an Italian soldier, Cornelius, has a vision and is instructed to send to Joppa for a man named Peter: “He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.” Cornelius sends two servants and a soldier to bring Peter to Caesarea.
- ▶ As Cornelius’ men are approaching Joppa, Peter is praying. God causes him to fall into a trance in which he is told to eat non-kosher food. When he refuses, he is warned: “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This scenario is repeated three times.

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

Acts 10.17-21

- ▶ The next day, Peter begins the two-day journey to Caesarea with Cornelius' men. In the meantime, Cornelius has gathered a house full of people together in anticipation of what God is going to tell them through Peter.

- ▶ When Peter arrives and enters Cornelius' house, he says:

“You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection.

Acts 10.28-29

- ▶ When Cornelius recounts his vision and the instructions of the Lord that lead to Peter being in his house, Peter began his message by saying—

“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right” (10.34-35).

- ▶ Peter shared the gospel of Jesus, and as he was still talking, “the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles” (10.44-45).

BACK IN JERUSALEM—

The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

Acts 11.1-3

► Peter recounted the entire experience and concluded by saying—

So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?” (11.17)

When [Peter’s critics] heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

A BIG ISSUE—

- ▶ The law given by God through Moses did not forbid a Jew to enter the house of a Gentile. That was a man-initiated prohibition, which ultimately, contributed to the ethnic and racial superiority of the Jews toward non-Jews.
- ▶ Prejudice and partiality is a result of sin; it has existed in the nature of every human being since Cain and Abel—Jesus Christ being the sole exception.
- ▶ Prejudices exist in nationality, race, ethnicity, color, religion, social and economic position, birth, heritage—the list is endless.
- ▶ It is rooted so deep in human nature—and even in the most imminent of Christ-followers, that only a transforming work of God can overcome its presence.

THE HEART OF GOD—

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

—John 3.16

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

—Ephesians 2.13-16

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But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

—Galatians 4:4-7