

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Exposition

by

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## CHAPTER TEN

In Ephesians 2:11-18, we read the blessed words concerning the Grace of GOD to the Gentiles.

**"Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."**

Up to this time in the Book of Acts we have seen nothing of this gracious purpose, the blessed result of the finished work of CHRIST on the cross. Jerusalem heard the Gospel first. Once more the good news of the Kingdom was preached with a full offer of forgiveness to the Jews.

GOD was willing to blot out their transgressions and to make good all He had promised to the nation.

Many signs and miracles had been done in Jerusalem in demonstration of the resurrection from the dead of the Prince of Life, whom they had crucified. We have seen how the seventh chapter in this book marks the close of that special offer to Jerusalem. Immediately after the death of Stephen, the Gospel was carried into Judea and Samaria. In Samaria a people heard and accepted the glad tidings. They were a mixed race and practiced circumcision and obeyed parts of the law.

In the ninth chapter the conversion of Paul is recorded and the Lord makes known that the persecutor of the church is to be the chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles. Paul, however, was not chosen to open first the door to the Gentiles as such, but Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision.

A new work is given him to do, which was indeed a strange work for a Jew. He was to go to the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered unclean. It was unlawful for a Jew to join himself to any Gentile; an insurmountable barrier divided them.

As we read in the words quoted from the Epistle to the Ephesians, Gentiles were "**aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise.**"

For this reason the Jews considered the Gentiles as unclean, common, spoke of them as dogs, and had no intercourse with them. It is of interest to notice that Peter tarried in Joppa; from this old city he is to be sent forth to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his household. Centuries ago another Jew had come to Joppa with a solemn message from his GOD, which he was commissioned to bear far hence to the Gentiles. Jonah, the prophet, took a ship from Joppa and refused obedience to the divine call.

But here is one who is obedient to the heavenly vision and who is to bring a higher message to the Gentiles, the good news of a free and full salvation.

That Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision, was chosen for this great errand, was an important hint that the middle wall of partition had been broken down and that believing Jews and Gentiles were to form one new man.

Yet with the vision he had which opened the way for Peter to go to the Gentiles; and the great results he had witnessed when Cornelius and his household believed, and the Holy Spirit fell upon them, the Apostle Peter could later in Antioch put up the same wall of partition which he knew was broken down.

**"For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come (Jews from Jerusalem), he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them, which were of the circumcision"** (Galatians 2:12).

He then built again the things he had destroyed.

The events of the tenth chapter are divinely pre-arranged; and both Cornelius and those with him, who were to hear the Gospel, and Peter the messenger, are prepared for it.

- Peter is divinely prepared and instructed to go,
- Cornelius is divinely prepared to send and to hear.

We divide the chapter into four parts.

- I. Cornelius of Caesarea and his Preparation** (Verses 1-8).
- II. The trance-vision of Peter in Preparation for his Mission** (Verses 9-16).
- III. Peter with Cornelius at Caesarea** (Verses 17-33).
- IV. Peter Preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles** (Verses 34-43).
- V. The interrupted Message** (Verses 44-48).

## I. Cornelius of Caesarea and his Preparation to hear the Gospel.

**"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa"** (Verses 1-8).

The city in which Cornelius dwelt is mentioned first, and it will not be out of place to give some information about that ancient city.

It must not be confounded with another Caesarea, of which we read in the Gospel, Caesarea Philippi. The Caesarea here was situated between Joppa and Dora. Augustus, the Emperor, gave this city to Herod; he made a most beautiful city out of it, spending immense sums of money. It was a Gentile city, though many Jews live there also.

Cornelius was a centurion, who was at the head of a band, which was known by the name of **"the Italian band."**

A legion in the Roman army had 6,000 men. Each legion was divided into 10 cohorts of 600 each, and a cohort was divided into six centuries, that is, a hundred men in each century. Cornelius was a centurion, he had charge of one of these subdivisions of a cohort.

Of another centurion we read in the Gospels. He was in character much like Cornelius, for it is said of him **"he loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue"** (Luke 7:5).

It is striking that two centurions, soldiers of rank, should be so prominently mentioned in connection with the Gospel. The Holy Spirit had done a gracious work in both of these Gentile soldiers. Cornelius must have been a man of authority. His name indicates this, for he belonged to the house to which also belonged the Scipios and Sulla. He was well known to the whole Jewish nation (verse 22); he also had a large circle of friends in Caesarea.

But he had more than a good report. He was a devout man, one that feared GOD with all his house, and who showed his piety by almsgiving and by prayer. **"He prayed to God alway."**

He belonged to that class of Gentiles who, illumined by the Holy Spirit, had turned to GOD from idols, to serve the true and the living GOD. He was godly and a converted man before Peter ever came to him and preached the Gospel in his house. It is wrong, therefore, to speak of the event described in this chapter as the conversion of Cornelius. Nor was he a proselyte who had become circumcised and accepted Judaism.

*Of salvation through the Lord JESUS CHRIST for himself and the blessed assurance of that salvation he knew nothing.*

It was at the ninth hour when Cornelius had a divine visitation. He was praying (verse 30) when a man stood before him in bright clothing. It seems Cornelius observed the Jewish hours of prayer; the ninth hour was 3 P.M., the time of the evening oblation. The appearing of the angel filled Cornelius with fear. The angel brought him the assurance that GOD had heard his prayers and that his good works were pleasing to GOD. They sprung from faith.

The angel also gave him the directions for sending to Peter, and where Peter was to be found, with whom he lodged and where his lodging house was located. Peter was to tell him what he ought to do. From this we may gather that his prayer must have been to GOD for light and guidance. How blessed and full of comfort all this is!

The Lord observed this devout centurion, He heard his prayers. His eye was upon Peter likewise and He knew his movements. And this is still the case. His loving, watching eye is upon all who are His. He still directs and guides those who depend on Him. What honor to serve such a Lord! Yet how little our poor, failing hearts enter into all this. How often we doubt and fear when faith should rejoice and praise.

Cornelius called at once two of his household servants and a devout soldier, and after he had acquainted them with the divine message and direction he had received, he sent them to Joppa, and they in due time reached their destination. While they were inquiring for Simon the tanner's house at the seaside, the chosen messenger had his vision.

## **II. The trance-vision of Peter in preparation for his mission.**

**"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Verses 9-16).**

*The messenger needed a preparation as well as Cornelius.*

As a Jew, though filled with the Spirit, he needed a special revelation to send him forth to the Gentiles.

On the day of Pentecost he had declared: **"For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call."**

Those "**afar off**" are the Gentiles.

Peter then did not realize the far-reaching meaning of this utterance. And when he heard from the Lord's own lips the great commission to preach the Gospel to every creature, he little understood that it meant the Gentiles.

Had someone demanded suddenly of Peter before this event occurred, that he should go and associate with Gentiles, enter their houses and speak to them concerning CHRIST, he would have drawn back in astonishment, if not in horror. But now the hour is come when it is to be known that indeed the middle wall of partition is broken down. Peter had tarried many days in Joppa. Nothing is said of further service he rendered in that city. He may have been waiting on the Lord for guidance. The messengers of Cornelius were nearing Joppa when Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. He still maintained Jewish forms. He had not yet broken his fast and while on the flat roof he fell into a trance. The vision he saw, coming out of the opened heaven, was a vessel like a great sheet. The four corners were together and thus the sheet was let down upon the earth. The sheet contained clean and unclean animals.

The voice from heaven demanded that Peter should kill and eat. And he who rebuked his Lord while on earth, there at Caesarea Philippi, when he said, after the Lord announced His coming passion, "**Be it far from Thee**" (Matthew 16:22), does so here again on the housetop of Caesarea. He said, "**Not so, Lord.**"

He protests that he had never eaten anything common or unclean. The voice came again the second time, telling him, "**What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.**" Thrice the same thing was done, and then straightway the vessel was received up into heaven. It returned to the place from which it had been lowered.

And what is the meaning?

- The vessel is the type of the church.
- The four corners represent the four corners of the earth.
- The clean animals it contained, the Jews;
- the unclean, the Gentiles.

But all in that vessel are cleansed. The Grace of GOD in the Lord JESUS CHRIST has cleansed those who are in CHRIST.

**"But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"** (I Corinthians 6:11).

Jew and Gentile believing, redeemed by blood, saved by Grace, washed and sanctified, are put into one body. What the great Apostle to the Gentiles wrote to the Ephesians is here made known in a vision.

**"The Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel"** (Ephesians 3:6).

The vessel came down from heaven and disappeared there.

This reveals the heavenly origin and the heavenly destiny of the church. The church is a heavenly revelation, and, as the vessel disappeared in heaven, so will the church someday be taken up into heaven to enter upon her heavenly destination. Such are the lessons which this vision clearly teaches.

### III. Peter with Cornelius at Caesarea.

**"Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them"** (Verses 17-20).

Peter was in doubt about the vision. What did it mean? Did it mean that all distinction between clean and unclean animals was to be abolished and that the great dietary instructions divinely given through Moses were to be abandoned?

Perhaps the words of the Lord came back to him, when He had said, "Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man it cannot defile him." He was deeply exercised about the vision to know its deeper meaning. But the Lord Himself had the interpretation of his vision ready for Peter.

Just at that moment the messengers of Cornelius, who had asked their way to Simon's house at the seaside, had arrived at the gate. GOD was arranging everything, even in the smaller details. His purpose and plan could not fail, nor can it ever fail. Nothing could hinder that which was to be accomplished. And so it is still. We need to fear no failure, nor do we need to worry, if we are in His plan.

And when these men were inquiring for Simon, surnamed Peter, whether he lodged there, Peter was still in deep thought on the vision. He did not hear the calling of the men at the gate. But another One spoke to him:

**"The Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down and go with them nothing doubting, for I have sent them."**

The Holy Spirit now begins His directions. The words reveal the truth of the personality of the Holy Spirit in a very striking way.

**"I have sent them"** is what the Holy Spirit declares.

And He who sent the three men to summon Peter to Caesarea, also commanded Peter to arise and to go with them without any hesitation.

**"Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am he whom you seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied them" (Verses 21-23).**

How great must have been Peter's astonishment, when he faced suddenly the three Gentiles at the gate. But could he doubt after such a vision?

Was not the presence of these three men, uncircumcised, unclean Gentiles, an explanation of the vision? The Holy Spirit furthermore had told him that they were sent by Himself and that he was to go with them. And the men now told him what had happened to Cornelius, the devout centurion, and that an angel of GOD had directed him to Peter.

The full light must have flashed upon the Apostle of the circumcision. He called them in and lodged them. This was certainly breaking away from Jewish customs. On the next morning we see a company leaving Joppa. Peter was not like Jonah, who fled from Joppa, but he leaves in obedience to the divine call, accompanied by certain brethren and the three messengers of Cornelius.

**"And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them. and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the seaside: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Verses 24-33).**

While the company was journeying on towards the city, Cornelius, who had called together his kinsmen and near friends, was waiting for the heaven-sent messenger.

With eager anticipation, longing for the blessed truth he was to hear, he waited for Peter's arrival. And then he came. No sooner did Cornelius see Peter than he fell down at his feet and worshipped. This happened outside of Cornelius' house, perhaps at a distance from it.

The first act he did was to fall at the Apostle's feet and to do him divine honor. In this he betrayed his heathen training. Remembering the vision of the angel he looked upon Peter as deserving the greatest honor. But Peter would not tolerate this for a moment. Lifting Cornelius up, he said, "**Stand up; I myself also am a man.**"

What Cornelius did was an act of worship.

The same word Satan used when he demanded that the Lord JESUS CHRIST should fall down and worship him. GOD alone is to be worshipped. Such reverence which Cornelius did is not to be rendered to a mere man nor to an angel (see Revelation 19:10 and 22:9).

"**Worship God;**" the Apostle John is told as he fell at the feet of the angel which showed him the things he saw.

Some Christians have declared that even the Lord JESUS CHRIST should not be worshipped. But this is a serious mistake. The Lord JESUS CHRIST is GOD and worship belongs to him. "**That all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father; he that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him**" (John 5:23).

***But what a contrast between Peter and those who claim to be the successors of Peter!***

That wicked man-made priesthood, which in its assumption has been the corruption of Christianity, demands honor and reverence from man. The pope and the priests accept reverence from man, which belongs only to the Lord. Ritualism, whether in Romish, Greek or Protestant form, always exalts a man and looks upon sinful man as having authority and therefore entitled to honor and worship. "His Worship," "His Grace," "His Reverence," "His Eminence," "His Holiness," etc., are the titles attached by ritualistic Christendom to men.

For this there is no authority whatever in the Word of GOD.

Peter's action here repudiates the whole thing. His Epistle in which by the Spirit of GOD he teaches the priesthood of all believers and not once mentions anything about himself, as holding a place above the other believers, is a complete refutation of traditional Christendom. Indeed, Ritualism is a return to heathenish customs; it is idolatry. Such is the teaching of Galatians 4:9-11.

Then Peter went with Cornelius into the house, telling him of how GOD had in the vision on the house top delivered him from the traditional Jewish prejudices and that he had now full liberty to enter into the house of a non-Jew and did no longer consider such an act unlawful.

Asking Cornelius for what intent he had sent for him, the centurion rehearses once more the answer which GOD had sent him, when he had prayed. He closes his address to Peter with those familiar words, "**Now, therefore, are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.**"

How beautiful all this is and how comforting to the heart!

In His days upon the earth our Lord had said:

**"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).**

Here in His own blessed way the risen CHRIST accomplishes what He predicted. The other sheep are the Gentiles, the one fold (flock) \* is the church and the one shepherd over all the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

\* Judaism was a fold, but Christianity, according to the New Testament, knows nothing of a fold, but there is one flock.

He was the actor in this great event. He drew Cornelius and spoke to him. And He is still the same Lord, who adds to His flock. He still calls the other sheep.

Cornelius and his kinsmen knew the messenger was sent of GOD and that the message he brings was GOD's message.

Peter knew he was sent and that souls had been prepared to hear the message. How blessed the meetings of GOD's people might be if such were always the case, and the servant of CHRIST were conscious in dependence on the Lord as His messenger, sent of GOD, and if those who come to hear, came expecting GOD's own message for their souls.

#### **IV. Peter preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.**

**"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Verses 34-43).**

There is a great difference between Peter's address to the Gentiles and his previously reported addresses to the Jews.

The word repentance so prominent in his witness to Jerusalem is absent entirely.

These words of Peter may be divided into three parts:

*1. The remarks introductory to the Gospel.*

Peter declares that he perceives that GOD is not a respecter of persons. This statement was made already in the Old Testament. See Deuteronomy 10:17; II Chronicles 19:7 and Job 34:19. The Holy Spirit brings this to Peter's remembrance.

Peter had previously looked upon GOD as a respecter of persons, but his experience had convinced him that such was not the case. The same truth is very significantly mentioned in the opening chapters of Romans, the chapters which so clearly prove that there is no difference, but that all, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD.

In Romans 2:10-11 we read: "**But glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles.**"

The same truth Peter states here: "**but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.**"

However, this does not mean, as it is so often declared, that the heathen's natural light and acquired morality renders him acceptable in the sight of GOD. The fear of GOD and the working of righteousness is not the product of the natural heart, but the work of GOD Himself. Such work is not confined to the Jewish soul but is done also through grace in the Gentiles. This is the meaning of the statement.

Peter adds something which is often overlooked.

He tells Cornelius and his friends that they were not ignorant of the Word which GOD sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by JESUS CHRIST, who is Lord of all. They knew of all this and had heard of it in some way. The blessing was in possession of the children of Israel. For this reason the centurion must have loved the nation Israel and did good unto them. But he had no assurance that that which was preached to Israel was to be enjoyed by him, nor did Peter realize it till GOD revealed it to him that the Gentiles were to be sharers of it.

*2. Then Peter explains that word and briefly rehearses the facts concerning JESUS of Nazareth.*

GOD had anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power. GOD was with Him. It was demonstrated by what He did, going about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. They had been witnesses of all this.

In a brief sentence Peter mentions the death of CHRIST, that they slew Him and hanged Him on a tree. Then follows the declaration of His resurrection. GOD raised Him up the third day. But He was not seen by all the people, but only by those whom GOD had chosen; who did eat and drink with Him.

With what interest the centurion and those with him must have listened to this blessed message, much of which was known to them by hearsay, but here stood Peter, one of the eye witnesses of all this which had happened.

One directly sent by GOD was telling out all this in their presence. But he was a Jew, who spoke these words. They were Gentiles. What meaning had all this for them? The third part of Peter's address makes this clear. It brings the blessed Gospel of CHRIST home to their hearts.

*3. The Apostle speaks next of the fact that CHRIST had given them a commission.*

He commanded them to preach unto the people and to testify that it is He which GOD ordained to be the judge of quick and dead. But the centurion and his company could not take any comfort in this preaching. Who else were the people but the Jewish people to whom that risen One had given commandment to preach.

The Holy Spirit might have worded His message in another way, which would have revealed the truth in a general way. He might have said that the Lord had given a commission which said: "Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature." From this they might have reasoned, we are creatures of GOD, therefore the Gospel is for us.

He chose another, a more precious way, a way which was to bring blessing to Peter's heart as well. The truth flashed at once into Peter's heart and mind as he spoke. "**To Him,**" he declares, "**give all the prophets witness that through His Name WHOSOEVER believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.**"

Some have made the statement that Peter and the other Apostles were not obedient to the Lord's command when they tarried in Jerusalem, that; it was the Lord's will for them to spread the Gospel among the Gentiles at once. Instead of carrying out the commission they abode in that city. However, this view is incorrect. They acted according to GOD's will.

Peter did not realize the full meaning of the Lord's purpose until the proper time had come for it and then the power of GOD made it clear to Him. It was revealed to Peter as he spoke these words that there was indeed no difference, that GOD is no respecter of persons.

The truth so fully revealed in a doctrinal way in Romans 3:22 that the righteousness of GOD, by faith in JESUS CHRIST is unto all and upon all them that believe, Jew and Gentile, bursts upon the Apostle of the circumcision through divine illumination.

Blessed and precious sentence, which Peter uttered - "**through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.**" Yes, whosoever, it is the word which tells out the meaning of the Gospel for a lost and guilty world. "**Whosoever**" - the Lord had used it Himself knowing the blessed results of His work on the cross. "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**" And when GOD closes His Holy Word on the last page, He must tell a sinful world once more that blessed word GOD's own redeemed people love so well. "**And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely**" (Revelation 22:17).

The great truth has been spoken for the first time. The full and free good news of salvation through His Name has been offered for the first time to Gentiles. What is the result?

## V. The interrupted Message.

**"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured forth the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized, in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days" (Verses 44-48).**

Peter's message was suddenly interrupted.

He intended to continue; he had only begun to speak (Chapter 11:15) when he was arrested. The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word.

Cornelius and those with Him had been ignorant of this very fact, which Peter had made known. They heard that all this salvation, the remission of sins, was for them and in that moment as they heard the Word they believed and as soon as they believed, the very moment they accepted this blessed message, the Holy Spirit fell on them.

It was then demonstrated that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given by hearing of faith.

The apostle of the Gentiles wrote later to the foolish Galatians, who were falling from grace by going back under the law, **"this only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"** (Galatians 3:2).

Even so in this blessed Gospel the sealing with the Spirit and much else is received in believing.

Something new had taken place.

- On Pentecost it meant water baptism as a condition of receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and the remission of sins;
- In Samaria the Apostles, Peter and John, according to the wisdom of GOD, had to lay on hands, but here without water baptism and laying on of hands the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles.

Nor was there any process of seeking, surrendering, examining themselves, giving up, praying for it, but by hearing of faith, in believing the message of the Gospel the Holy Spirit fell on them.

And to show that every barrier between Jew and Gentile had been removed, that nothing inferior had been bestowed upon Gentiles, than that which came upon the believing Jews on the day of Pentecost, Cornelius, his kinsmen and friends spoke with tongues and magnified GOD. It was the conclusive evidence that Gentiles, uncircumcised and unbaptized, received the Holy Spirit like the Jews.

**"And as I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us in the beginning."**

Water baptism follows. Up to this chapter water baptism preceded the gift of the Holy Spirit. This shows the place water baptism holds on the ground of grace. Water baptism has no place in the proclamation of the Gospel of Grace. It is not a means of grace, nor a sacrament.

Peter, however, does not slight nor ignore baptism. "**Can any man forbid water?**"

Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. This shows that not Peter himself did this act; it is therefore not a ministerial thing. This, too, was done here in anticipation of what should be made of baptism through "**ordained men**" who claim apostolic succession.

Peter was requested to tarry with the happy company certain days. No doubt he must have fulfilled their request. What blessed intercourse they must have had!

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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