

Acts of the Apostles study 11 – The Household of Cornelius:-

Read Acts chapter 10, verses 23 – 48:- This chapter marks a turning point in the outreach and growth of the early Christian Church enabling it to fulfil the final commands of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 28, verse 19 and Acts chapter 1, verse 8. The ongoing struggle to incorporate Gentile converts is recorded in both the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles.

Acts chapter 10, verses 23 – 29:- Caesarea was an important city and seaport on the Mediterranean coast about 35 miles north of Joppa. (Not Caesarea Philippi which was inland, north of Galilee at the foot of Mount Hermon). It was the official residence of both the Herodian kings and the Roman Procurators. Peter travelled with the 3 three messengers and six Jewish Christians from Joppa – these were important witnesses of the events which followed, see Acts chapter 11, verse 12. Note that Peter refused the act of ‘worship’ given by Cornelius (verse 23). The explanation given by Peter for his visit to a Gentile household, even though it was forbidden to a Jew, would be as much for his Christian companions as for Cornelius and his household!

Verses 30 – 33:- In expectation of an important message from God, Cornelius had gathered “*his kinsmen and close friends*”. Peter had a ready made and attentive congregation!

Verses 34 – 43:- Peter now had no doubt in his mind that these Gentiles should hear the Good News of the Gospel. In verse 36 the word translated as “*message*” in some versions, is “*logos*” (the word) in the original Greek. A reminder to us that the ‘Living Word’ is the Lord Jesus Christ himself! (See The Gospel of John chapter 1, verses 1 -4). He not only brought the message He **was** the message. Peter does not get hung up in theology. He simply relates the facts about the life, death and resurrection and the charging of these Apostles with the preaching of the Gospel “*everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His Name*”.

Verses 44 – 48:- On this occasion the order of ‘Believe’, ‘be Baptised’, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ in Acts chapter 2, verse 38 is reversed! To emphasise the acceptance of the Gentile believers, the Holy Spirit was given before any declaration of faith could be made by the hearers.

That there were Jewish Christians present with Peter meant that there were essential witnesses to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles. That “*God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him*” - verses 34 – 35. The six visitors from Joppa “*were astonished that the gift of the Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles*” (verse 45). The believers in Jerusalem were yet to be convinced!

1) There's A Wideness In God's Mercy
Like The Wideness Of The Sea;
There's A Kindness In His Justice,
Which Is More Than Liberty.

2) There Is No Place Where Earth's Sorrows
Are More Felt Than Up In Heaven;
There Is No Place Where Earth's Failings
Have Such Kindly Judgment Given.

3) There Is Plentiful Redemption
In The Blood That Has Been Shed;
There Is Joy For All The Members
In The Sorrows Of The Head.

4) For The Love Of God Is Broader
Than The Measure Of Man's Mind.
And The Heart Of The Eternal
Is Most Wonderfully Kind.

5) But We Make His Love Too Narrow
By False Limits Of Our Own;
And We Magnify Its Strictness
With A Zeal He Will Not Own.

6) Pining Souls, Come Nearer Jesus,
And O Come Not Doubting Thus,
But With Faith That Trusts More Bravely
His Great Tenderness For Us.

Selected verses from the hymn “Souls of men why will ye scatter”. *Frederick William Faber 1862*