

## **The Acts of the Holy Spirit 12 – The Gospel is for all men everywhere! – Acts Chapter 10**

Caesarea was a very busy place. We have seen how Philip made his home there with his four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy **Acts 8:40; Acts 21: 8**. We have seen how Saul went there on his way to Tarsus after some Greek-speaking Jews had plotted to kill him, **Acts 9:30**, and now we find that the Roman centurion, Cornelius lived there. In fact Caesarea was one of the busiest ports in the Mediterranean. It was a large Roman city served by an aqueduct that provided the inhabitants water for some of the luxuries they had become used to.

### **Acts 10:1-8.**

Cornelius was a man who knew about God, he was a religious man. He gave money to help the poor and he prayed regularly. but he didn't know Jesus. God knows all about every person including whether they are searching or not; He promises that all who diligently search for Him will find Him. So it is no surprise to discover this story of Cornelius receiving a vision of an angel. God knows just what it takes to get through to people, especially those who we are praying for. As we pray for family and friends we can trust God to get through to them, **Acts 10:1-6**

**Sharing Jesus:** Here is a simple prayer for your unsaved loved ones. As you speak God's Word, remember that it will not return to Him void. It will prosper in the thing whereto it is sent, **Isaiah 55:11**

"Father, I come before You in prayer and in faith, believing. Your Word says You desire all men to be saved and come into the knowledge of the truth, so I bring \_\_\_\_\_ before You this day. I break the power of Satan from his assignments and activities in \_\_\_\_\_'s life in the Name of Jesus. Now, while Satan is bound, I ask that You send forth the perfect labourers to share the good news of the gospel in such a way that \_\_\_\_\_ will listen and understand it. As the truth is ministered, I believe \_\_\_\_\_ will open his/her eyes to the gospel, come out of the snare of the devil and make Jesus Lord. Father, I ask that You fill \_\_\_\_\_ with the knowledge of Your will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. As I intercede on his/her behalf, I believe that the power of the Holy Spirit is activated, and from this moment on, I shall praise and thank You for \_\_\_\_\_'s salvation. I am confident that You are alert and active, watching over Your Word to perform it. It will not return to You void. It will accomplish that which You please and prosper in the thing whereto it was sent. Therefore, my confession of faith is: 'God has begun a good work in \_\_\_\_\_'s life and He will perform it and bring it to full completion until the day of Jesus Christ, in Jesus' Name.'"

The question we need to ask is: What would we do if we had a similar vision? Would we obey what the angel told us to do? Perhaps the first question to ask is: Do we expect God to speak with us, or even to communicate with us?

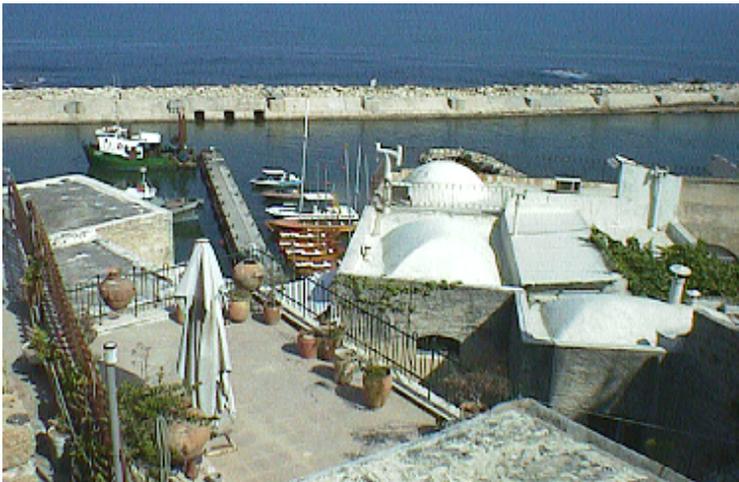
God will do what He has to in order to get our attention, but the decision as to whether we even notice Him, or once we have noticed Him to obey Him is entirely ours. There are many examples of people running away from God once He has spoken to them; the most starkly dramatic is that of Jonah who was asked by God to speak to the people of Nineveh. He heard what God had to say, then turned his back and went in entirely the opposite direction. God continued with him, but in order to get back to what God really wanted him to do, he had to go through some pretty torrid times. Being swallowed alive by a whale was not really what he was wanting. The story of Jonah is a really exciting read!

It is so urgent that we listen to God and obey Him – whatever He says. He wants only the very best for us. Stop and ask Him if some of the problems in our life are caused by us hearing and going in the opposite direction. If we realise this is the situation it is important that we repent and ask Him how we can sort it otherwise we might make it worse. Nothing is too hard for Him, but He will only do anything with a willing partner!! **Jeremiah 32:26-27**

Sometimes we can think that what we have done is too bad to be forgiven. Saul was a murderer, so was Moses, David was an adulterer and was involved in murder. Matthew who wrote the Gospel was a thief and an embezzler, but when they turned to God, He transformed them. Saul was renamed Paul by God to demonstrate his change of allegiance, and he went on to write most of the New Testament. Moses was used by God after he had given his life to Him, to lead the Israelites, all 2 million of them, out of slavery in Egypt, and into the land of Israel, **Exodus 3:11-12**. David was a man who, when he had agreed with God about his sin, repented and went on to be the greatest leader Israel ever had,

**Psalm 51:1-2.** God Himself said that David was a man after His own heart. Matthew recognised his shortcomings, left his old ways and gave his life to God as Jesus walked past him one day. He literally stopped what he was doing, left his job as a tax collector and followed Jesus for the rest of his life. Zacchaeus was another, **Luke 19:2-10.** He gave his life to God and restored all he had stolen from the public in his job as a Tax Collector. What we must do to ask God to take control of our lives is not easy, but it is amazing when we do it! Cornelius came to the point where he knew that, in order to move his life forward, he had to do what God asked him to do.

God will never lead you at a pace faster than you are prepared to go. All that Cornelius had to do first was to listen to the angel, **Acts 10:5-6.** The instructions were simple enough. He was told who to get, where he could find him, then what to ask him to do once he had found him. Cornelius responded in obedience. Now perhaps you are not in a position where you can go yourself or perhaps, like Cornelius you are a man in authority, and you want to send somebody else, **just do it.** Cornelius selected three people for this task – two servants and one godly man, **Acts 10:7-8.**



(The picture here at the left is the view from the flat roof where Peter prayed in Joppa, **Acts 10:9.**)

### **Acts 10: 9-23.**

When God speaks to us and asks us to go to another person, we can guarantee that He has also prepared the heart of the other person. Here we can see both sides of the story. Cornelius was a religious man who needed to find the true reason for his religion - Jesus. (There are many people in the world like that today.) Peter, on the other hand had found Jesus, he had lived around Him for three years, during His entire ministry on earth, but he had a problem. His religious attitude still had a greater hold on him in some areas than Jesus did.

Many people think that God is a white-haired authority – a father figure with a big stick. Step out of line and you will know about it! This kind of thinking could not be further from the truth. Watch how He deals with Peter in this situation, **Acts 10:9-17.** Peter had been taught never to touch what was 'unclean', and in the Bible, these creatures are described as 'unclean'. Not only should they not be eaten, but they should not even be touched, but this vision was very clearly from God. Peter was looking for any opportunity to serve God, he wanted to hear from Him and he was learning to walk in the power of his Christian faith walking in the Holy Spirit. Peter was truly concerned. When God orchestrates something, it all comes together and things fit in the most amazing ways. Notice that this happened to Peter while the three men sent by Cornelius were nearing Joppa. While Peter was praying, the three men were making their way to the house. Just at the time when Peter was wondering what on earth his vision was all about, who should be knocking on the door but the three men!

Gentiles (those who were not Jews) were regarded by Jews as unclean. A true Jew would have nothing to do with them for fear of becoming unclean himself. Peter was a true Jew, but one who was now a Believer. When he saw the three men, he realised what the Holy Spirit had been saying to him. 'Even though these men are unclean, go with them because I have asked you to do it. Don't ask questions now, just do it!' **Acts 10:17-23.** When God asks you to do something, there is a reason behind it. It may be that He has asked you to do it because He has already prepared the other person to meet you to help you (or it may be that He wants you to help them!) In either case, there will be a purpose to His request that goes far beyond you and me. We, as humans, can only accept so much before our brains overload with the complexity, but that is not the case with God. He sees the end even though it may be years and many thousands of encounters with different people on the way. God does not do things haphazardly; there is always a purpose in what He does.

So Peter and some other Believers left Joppa for Caesarea. What did they talk about? Did Peter share his vision or ask for any understanding from his fellow travellers? Perhaps it was along the lines of hardly daring to believe that God would offer His salvation to the Gentiles. Did He really mean what He said when He instructed them to go into all the world? **Acts 1:8**

Up to that point, Peter had understood that the disciples had to go into all the world, just as Jesus had said, but he believed that they had to go and find every **Jew** in the entire world and preach the gospel to them – that the Good News of Jesus was only for the Jews. This would be difficult enough, but now suddenly as a result of his vision and of these men coming to meet him, the truth of the Gospel being for **everyone** was beginning to dawn on him. The enormity of the task ahead of the disciples would have been breathtaking.

Perhaps he had forgotten Jesus' words to the disciples:

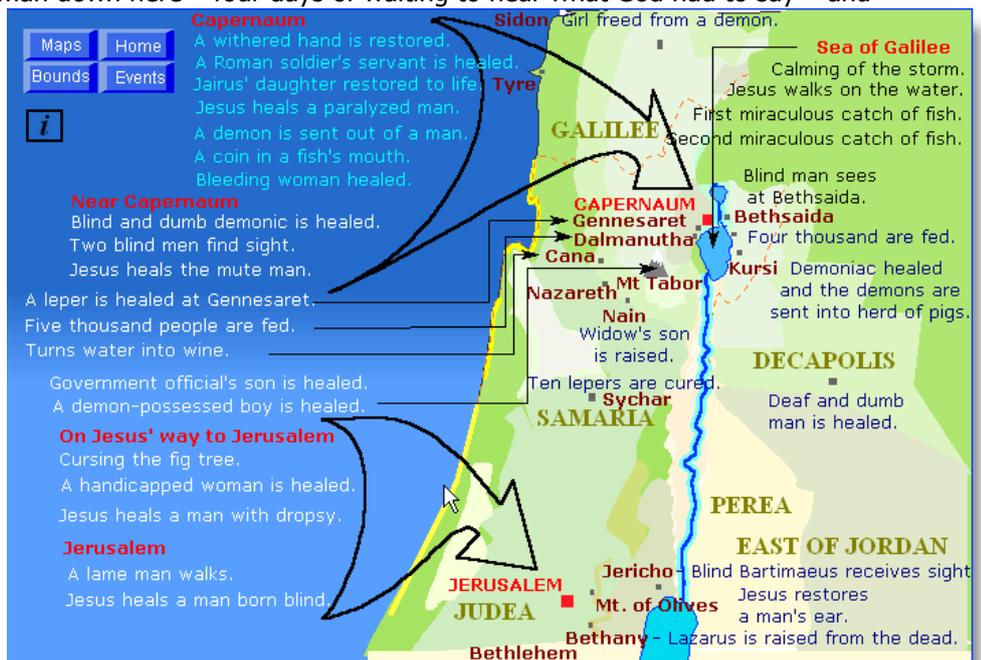
And then he told them, "You are to go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere....." **Mark 16:15**

**Acts 10:24-44.**

When they arrived, there was a reception committee awaiting them. Cornelius had high expectations that what Peter was going to tell him was going to change his life and the lives of his family and friends for ever, but he had also elevated Peter in his own mind to something he was not. Ministers of the Gospel are not gods – they are servants. Peter understood that and he quickly dispelled any doubts in Cornelius' mind. **Acts 10:24-27**

The sooner that those that are the servants of the Living God recognise that we are here to serve Him and not to receive praise and honour from men, the faster we will accomplish our task of reaching all men everywhere. Peter was under no illusions as to his position and wasted no time in going to Cornelius, but he had to know that what God had sent him to say was really what Cornelius expected to hear, **Acts 10:28-29**

So what about us? Do we make a lot of fuss about getting to see someone, but we really don't want to hear what he has to say? There was none of that here. Many people had come to listen to what Peter had to say. There was an expectation about the place. They couldn't wait to hear what Peter had to say! **Acts 10:30-33** It had taken four days to get this man down here – four days of waiting to hear what God had to say – and now they were all ready. If God spoke to us and said that someone would arrive in four days' time and let us know the answer to our problem, what would we think? In today's hustle and bustle, would we even remember about it in four days time? We need to be pregnant followers of Jesus Christ always expecting our amazing God to answer our prayers to bring to birth changed lives, and watch over us to keep us at the centre of His will. If we expect nothing we will never be disappointed!



These people opened their hearts to what Peter had to say and as the Holy Spirit spoke through him as he had a pure heart after the divine revelation of all people being acceptable to God. He just shared Jesus! **Acts 10:34-43**

The words that Peter spoke had a profound effect on all who heard him. This was not because of the words themselves, but because what was said allowed the Holy Spirit to move in their lives. This is the very work that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to do. It is the very essence of what He planned to happen in our lives. We would be led into all truth, **John 16:13-15**. Even as Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit moved on that group of people. They responded, gave their lives to Jesus and were filled with the Holy Spirit! **Acts 10:44**

**Acts 10:45-48.**

Perhaps Peter had thought about the implications of the Gentiles receiving the Good News about Jesus and entering into all the benefits of becoming Believers, but those who had accompanied him on the trip to Caesarea most certainly had not. If the Gentiles should be able to believe in Jesus, then how could anyone prevent them from being baptised? – even Roman soldiers who after all were an occupying force in Israel!

<sup>45</sup> The Jews who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit would be given to Gentiles too! <sup>46,47</sup> But there could be no doubt about it, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Peter asked, "Can anyone object to my baptising them, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" <sup>48</sup> So he did, baptising them in the name of Jesus, the Messiah. Afterwards Cornelius begged him to stay with them for several days. **Acts 10:45-48**

These Gentiles had also been baptised in the Holy Spirit. How did Peter and his companions know this? Because these men and women spoke in tongues. That was all the evidence they needed to prove it. What does that mean for us today? Some people rationalise and try to convince themselves that speaking in tongues passed away with the apostles sometime towards the end of the first century AD. We should just believe what God says in His Word. Speaking in tongues was not the only Gift they received. They now had at

their disposal all the other Gift of the Spirit as He came upon them in power. These gifts are also for you and me as we are baptised in the Holy Spirit. They are there to help us live our lives in victory over the power of Satan as he desperately tries to convince us that they are not for us – how could they be we have done nothing to deserve them! We didn't deserve to be born again, but the same Holy Spirit Who wants to give us these gifts gave us the faith to believe God for salvation. So we need to

**if you invited Jesus Christ into your life,  
believe God's promises**

**THE PAST IS GONE**  
So there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus.  
*Romans 8:1*

**YOU HAVE A NEW FATHER WHO HAS SET YOU FREE**  
So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free.  
*John 8:36*

**YOU WILL NEVER BE ALONE**  
For God has said,  
"I will never, never fail you nor forsake you."  
*Hebrews 13:5*

**YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN**  
For He has rescued us out of the darkness and gloom of Satan's kingdom and brought us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, who bought our freedom with His blood and forgave us all our sins.  
*Colossians 1:13-14*



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take God at His Word, and receive all that He has for us!

So now that these people were Believers and were baptised in the Holy Spirit, how could they not also be baptised in water? So Peter continued with the job in hand. There was work to be done – many people to be baptised and lots of rejoicing as family and friends entered into the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Their future was now secure. They were Christians, and Jesus would never leave them nor forsake them (**Hebrews 13:5**), neither would anyone ever pluck them out of His hand! (**John 10:28**)



Not much is left of Caesarea now. What there is has been buried for centuries. It has been ravaged by the sea, by armies, by navies and by time. Only the true stories of the exciting things that will be recounted time and again on earth and when that is no more in heaven for eternity – will live on, undamaged. We have had the privilege to look in on Cornelius and the trouble that God went through to reach one of His chosen sons. But what about us? Will we now believe all that God wants us to receive? Will we be obedient and listen to Jesus as He softly bids us come to Him for healing, spiritual, physical as well as emotional? Accept all that has been so freely given so that we will stand the test of time with our faith in Jesus Christ.

## **Acts of the Holy Spirit 12 – The Gospel is for all men everywhere! – Challenge Questions**

**This week we are starting a new procedure to help sharing in class. Please complete all questions marked with \* and then complete the rest of the study. The more you look in the Word the more you will get out of it. Read the chapter at the beginning of the week then you have time to meditate on it, rather than rushing! Make the Word your number one priority.**

- 1. \*Read the Notes and the Bible Verses** referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you.
2. Did Cornelius do what God asked? Give an example from Page 1 of the Notes of someone who was disobedient. What happened to him? Did you make time to read his story?
3. \*Why did the Believers think that what Jesus had taught them during His three years of ministry was only for them? Were they correct in thinking this way? If not, why not?
4. \*Why do you think that it was such a great shock to them to discover the reality that they were not the only recipients of the Truth? Who in reality was the Gospel for?
5. Jesus commissioned His followers (His disciples) to go and make other disciples. How were they to do this? How can you and I do that today? **Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18.**

### **Read Acts 11:1-18**

6. \*What is the difference between a person who has just been born again and a disciple? Does God have any other ways than through you and me to make disciples (Does He have a Plan B if we (Plan A) fail)?
7. \*When the news of people other than Jews becoming Believers arrived in Jerusalem, were the disciples and apostles glad? What emotion did they have? Why did they feel like this? Can we feel the same way when others receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour?
8. Peter had the opportunity to justify his position. Do you think he spoke well as he explained what had happened? Do you think his speech had the desired result? What did the apostles and disciples decide?

9. The result of Peter explaining the Gospel to those who wanted to accept Jesus was that they received the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Why is it possible for every Believer to receive the Holy Spirit?
10. \*Explain what 'Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit' means. What is the job of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Believer?
11. How do you receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Is this for all people, just some, or none? Explain your answer.

**Read Acts 11:19-30**

12. \*What effect did the persecution following the death of Stephen have on the Believers? What effect does persecution have on the church today? Can you give examples?
13. What nationality besides the Jews did these people explain the Word of God to? What was the result? If you speak about Jesus to your friends, what result do you expect?
14. \*When the apostles and disciples heard of these Gentiles becoming Believers, what was the result? What did Barnabas do that was so different to what had been done before?
15. Barnabas went to look for Saul. Where do you think he looked and how did he know where to find him? Barnabas and Saul began a friendship at his time. How would this have affected a country as big as modern day Turkey?
16. \*What did Barnabas and Saul do to help those who were suffering from famine? Can we help other Christians in our areas? If so, how? Will this have an effect on the outside world?