

"Peter's Defense of His Ministry to the Gentiles"

Acts 11

Introduction: The last time we were together in the book of Acts we finished chapter 10. This chapter proved to be very significant because it is in chapter 10 that the door was opened to the Gentiles to be brought into the body of Jesus Christ. Peter was the Apostle whom God appointed to deliver the Gospel to the house of Cornelius. The reason for this was because Peter was given the keys to the kingdom.

Matthew 16:18-19

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Since Peter had the "keys" he had to be present to open the door for the Gentiles. Peter had opened the door to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost and he had also opened the door to the Samaritans in Acts 8. Then in chapter 10 Peter was there to open the door to the Gentiles.

I want to raise a question here that has come into my mind; "Why were the keys given to Peter and not one of the others?" I believe the answer is seen in Matthew 16.

Matthew 16:13-17

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Peter was the very first Apostle to confess that he believed Jesus was the Messiah. Peter was not influenced by the religious leaders or the crowds of Jesus day. He believed in the miracles of Jesus; he believed the Words of Jesus and he believed what God had impressed upon his heart concerning Jesus. Being the first one to declare that Jesus was the Messiah put him in the position of receiving the keys to the kingdom. Peter was far from perfect but he was not influenced by the religious leaders who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Peter was a critical thinker. He did not believe something just because it was the popular opinion.

Application:

I need to just pause a moment and emphasize how important this is today. We live in a day of great deception which will grow worse as time goes on and therefore, we must be critical thinkers. Much of what we are told to believe today is coming from people who believe in transgenderism, same sex marriage, abortion, and many other ungodly practices. Why should we take direction from these people who have no relationship with God and are instruments of Satan? Let us learn to go directly to the Scriptures to get our direction for life.

Getting back to the thought, chapter 10 is very important and we would think that all the Apostles would rejoice over the salvation of the Gentiles. But that is not the case.

➤ **The Objections**

Notice Acts 11:1-3

News of the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit traveled very quickly. The news came to Jerusalem before Peter could get there. When Peter arrived at Jerusalem the believing Jews who were there contended with Peter concerning the fact that he ate with the Gentiles. Let me explain a little of the view the Jews had concerning the Gentiles. The Jews saw the Gentiles as completely unclean. If a Jew was walking down the street and their clothing brushed against a Gentile, they believed that they were then unclean and they had to go through ceremonial cleansing. On top of that they believed their clothing had to be burned. Many of the Jews believed that God created the Gentiles just to keep the fires of hell burning, in other words they were considered fuel for the fires.

This view was developed by the Jews on their own. This was not God's view of the Gentiles. Israel was actually called to be a light to the Gentiles. They were to manifest God to all the other nations.

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

² And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Isaiah 49:5-6

⁵ And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

⁶ And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

God's love for the Gentiles is seen in Jonah's day when God sent Jonah to warn Nineveh of coming judgment. They repented and God withheld His judgment. Then we read the Words of Jesus to Nicodemus.

John 3:16-17

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.

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Notice Acts 11:1-3 again.

The Jews saw eating a meal as a time of close fellowship with those whom the meal was shared with. The Jews at Jerusalem who confronted Peter were so caught up in their manmade traditions that they seemed to have missed the fact that the Gentiles were saved. They should have been rejoicing but instead they were critical of Peter that he had ate with the Gentiles.

Application:

There are people today who are the very same way. They are so caught up in legalism that when someone outside their circle comes to the Lord, they are more concerned with some legalistic hangup and it keeps them from rejoicing in the fact that the person is saved.

➤ **The Explanation**

Notice Acts 11:4

Peter is now going to give a detailed explanation of how he ended up in the house of Cornelius. Here in this passage Peter gives his listeners three points of evidence.

1. The vision - Acts 11:5-11

Notice Acts 11:5a

The entire event started with Peter praying. He was on his knees when the vision came to him.

Application:

It is important to point out that many great events start when God's people are in prayer.

James 5:16b

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

1 John 5:13-15

¹³ *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

¹⁵ *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

Notice Acts 11:5-11

Peter had the vision and then the men from the house of Cornelius showed up. Let me just say something here that we need to understand. God does not speak through visions today. Visions were given in the early church to reveal new revelation.

2 Corinthians 12:1

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

Today we have a completed Bible and so there is no new revelation given. If there were visions today, they would be a new revelation. They would be Truth apart from the Word of God. Neither does God give direction for life through visions. His Word is our compass for life and it is through His Word that He speaks to us and guides us. Now the question would come up concerning people who claim to have visions today. Let us keep in mind that Satan is a counterfeiter and he will do whatever he can to cause confusion in the body of Jesus Christ. He can even give visions that may be accurate.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¹³ For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

2. The Witness of the Spirit.

Notice Acts 11:12-15

Peter was called by the Spirit to go to the house of Cornelius and then when the Gentiles believed the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spoke in tongues. Peter was telling the Jews that this was something special. God was working through the vision and the Holy Spirit was working in Peter and in the Gentiles. The timing itself showed that God was moving to bring the Gentiles into the body of Jesus Christ.

Let us not miss verse 15 and what Peter says here. He refers to how the Spirit fell upon the Jews at the beginning. The question is, "The beginning of what?" The "beginning" referred to here is the beginning of the church and we know that Peter is referring to what happened in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. This is when the church began.

Application:

There are no visions today and there is no speaking in tongues, but there are Divine appointments. There are times in our lives when God orchestrates the events of our lives because He has arranged a meeting for us. He works to bring us into contact with people who have a need. It may be that they need salvation, or maybe just someone to talk to, or maybe they need prayer, or guidance. There are many times when God directs our steps

into the life of a person with a need. Our responsibility is twofold. **First**, we must be sensitive to His leading. **Second**, we must be obedient to make time for the person in need.

3. The witness of the Word.

Notice Acts 11:16

Peter remembered the Words of Jesus as He spoke of Spirit baptism.

Acts 1:4-5

⁴ And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

⁵ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Notice Acts 11:17

Peter was in a sense saying, "I am a Jew also. I had the same feelings toward the Gentiles which you Jews have. But how could I ever stand against the will of God?"

Conclusion:

Notice Acts 11:18

This is a marvelous verse. The Jews who confronted Peter were certainly legalistic, but they were also reasonable. They listened to what Peter had to say and they too concluded that they could not stand in the way of God's will.

These men were living in a transitional time. The church was beginning and they still had their Jewish roots and beliefs. Therefore, they needed to be willing to accept change. Today we are not in a transitional time God's Word has been established and completed. I point this out because I listened to a pastor while we were away and he was talking on the subject of tongues. He said he used to take a hard stand against tongues but now he had come to realize that God can do whatever He wants. My response to that is, "No He cannot!" If His Word says tongues would cease and they did then He cannot cause someone to speak in tongues because that would be a violation of His own Word.