

A WORLDWIDE MINISTRY IN CAESAREA (PART I): BREAKING DOWN PREJUDICE ACTS 10:01–33

Introduction

Prejudice and partiality exist. From the beginning of time prejudice has existed (Cain and Abel, Gen. 4:1f). Prejudice is everywhere in the world — in every nation, state, city and neighbourhood. Prejudice (discrimination) even exists within families between parent and child, brother and sister, close family and distant relatives. Feelings toward and against people are a tragic reality. Note several facts about prejudice.

1. There are at least two basic reasons for prejudice.
 - a. People differ. They differ in nationality, colour, beliefs, religion, speech, looks, behaviour, ability, energy, position, status, social standing, possessions, wealth, birth, heritage. Prejudice arises when people feel they and their differences make them better than others.
 - b. Mistreatment causes prejudice, both mistreating others and being mistreated. When a person mistreats or is mistreated by others his nature is immediately aroused to become biased and judgemental. The mistreatment that gives rise to prejudice covers a wide range of behaviour: ignoring, neglecting, joking, gossiping, opposing, cursing, abusing, fighting against, persecuting, passing over, segregating, enslaving.
2. The present passage strikes a fatal blow against prejudice. It shows forever that Jesus Christ has erased all prejudices and barriers between people. Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ Jesus. This is the subject of the present passage. However, before launching into the passage, some background will be helpful in understanding just what is happening and the significance of it.

The Jews, like all other people of the earth, had developed their own laws and customs; and every Jewish child was born and reared in the environment of those laws and customs. And, like all other people, they were steeped in their own nationality and looked upon other people with suspicion. However, there were two factors that made the Jewish prejudice run deeper than most.

1. The Jewish people had always been mistreated, enslaved and persecuted much more than the other people of the world. Through the centuries, the Jewish people had been conquered by army after army, and by the millions they had been deported and scattered over the world. Even in the day of Jesus they were enslaved by Rome. Their religion was the binding force that kept Jews together, in particular their belief that God had called them to be a distinctive people (who worshipped the only true and living God) and their rules governing...
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- the Sabbath
- the temple
- intermarriage
- worship and cleansing
- diet, what foods they could and could not eat

Their beliefs and their rules kept them separated from outside beliefs and from being swallowed up by other nationalities through intermarriage. Their religion was what maintained their distinctiveness as a people and as a nation.

Jewish leaders knew this. They knew that their religion was the *binding force* that held their nation together. Therefore, they opposed anyone or anything that threatened or attempted to break the laws of their religion and nation.

2. The Jews misread and misinterpreted God's Word and His purpose for them. God had called Abraham and given birth to the Jewish nation for one primary purpose — that they might be His people, His witnesses, His missionaries to the rest of the world. God had given the Jews His Word and instructed them to take His Word to the world and tell them about God. They were to bear witness that God is — that God does exist — and that men are to worship and serve Him and Him alone.

It was here that Israel failed. Instead of proclaiming God and His Word of righteousness and morality to the world, Israel separated itself from the world, hoarding and claiming that God and His law were theirs and theirs alone. They became *separatists*, extremely prejudiced, building barriers and partitions between themselves and the other people of the world (Gentiles). Prejudice became so deep-seated that attitudes such as the following were adopted:

- ⇒ They called other people “dogs.”
- ⇒ They would have no contact with a Gentile unless absolutely necessary, and then after contact, they had to go through a religious ceremony to be cleansed.
- ⇒ They would not help a Gentile woman who was giving birth lest another Gentile be born into the world.

It was into such a world that the church was born, a world of prejudice, the prejudice...

- of Jew against Gentile
- of Gentile against Jew
- of Gentile against Gentile

How was God going to overcome and break down the walls and barriers of prejudice that had been built up through the centuries of history? How was He going to get His church, His people, to break away from their Jewish roots in order to reach out to the whole world?

That is the point of the present passage. The doors of God's salvation are about to be gloriously swung open to the people of the world. Every man will soon have the

wonderful privilege of hearing the marvellous message proclaimed: God is love and has sent His dear Son into the world that the world might be saved and not perish. The present passage shows how God broke through the prejudicial environment and customs of his dear servant Peter. God led Peter to swing open the door to a Gentile soldier who was desperately crying out to God.

The story is one of the great stories of history, and it should be studied by all people everywhere. A study of this event shows that God has broken down the barrier of racial and religious prejudice between men. He intends them to be erased forever — in the name of His dear Son who came to show that God loves all men and wishes all men to be saved.

This account of the passage can be titled: “The Breakdown of Prejudice” or “The Opening of the Door to the Gentiles.” The door could not be opened until the existing prejudices were dealt with; therefore, the story deals mainly with the breaking down of the prejudices between the Gentile Cornelius and the Jewish minister Simon Peter.

Because of the length of the story and *its significance*, the event is divided and dealt with in three parts.

Part 1: Breaking down Prejudice (Acts 10:1-33).

Part 2: Preaching Peace (Gentiles) (Acts 10:34-43).

Part 3: Receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48).

The present study is, Part 1: The breaking down prejudice. Note the major points:

- I. The breakdown of prejudice in the Gentile, Cornelius (vv. 1-8).
- II. The breakdown of prejudice in the Jew, Peter (vv. 9-22).
- III. The confrontation: lessons learned by the Jew and the Gentile, the prejudiced of the world (vv. 23-33).

I. Acts 10:01–08 Breakdown of Prejudice in the Gentile

The breakdown of prejudice in the Gentile, Cornelius. Note: it is God who breaks down prejudice. Prejudice is so deep-seated in the heart of man, only God can erase it and reconcile man.

1. Cornelius was a soldier, a military officer, a Centurion in the Roman army (see *Centurion*, Acts 23:23). The Italian band simply means that all the soldiers (100) under his command were from Italy. Cornelius was stationed in Caesarea. This is important to note, for Caesarea was a Gentile city, a place in which strict Jews would never set foot, not if preventable.
2. Cornelius had an unusual reverence for God. He was...
 - a devout man: one who worshipped the true and living God.

- a God-fearing man: one who sensed the presence of God in the world and knew he was responsible to God to live righteously, justly and morally toward all men.
- a benevolent and charitable man: one who gave to charity. Note: he gave “generously.”
- a *praying* (deomenos) man: the word means *begging of God*. Note that he prayed *regularly*.

The point is this: Cornelius was totally unlike most of the Gentiles of his day. He was not worshipping false gods. The Scripture says he worshipped and *prayed to God* (to theou). In Greek this means the true God, the only living and true God. Cornelius had done two things.

- a. He had looked at nature and at the world around him and seen that there was bound to be one God who had created all things.

Rom 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

- b. He had looked at Jewish religion (Judaism) and seen that it was head and shoulders above all other religions in...
 - its worship of one God.
 - its teachings of righteousness and justice and morality.
 - its religious practices such as praying three times daily. (Note his praying at the Jewish ninth hour, which today is 3 p.m.)

But note: Cornelius did not become a Jewish worshipper. He was not circumcised (see Acts 11:3). He would never consent to becoming a Jewish convert. He could learn from them and their religion, but he would never become one of them. The prejudice existing within his own heart, existing between Gentile and Jew was too great to overcome. (We must always remember, prejudice is too great to overcome in the flesh of natural man.)

3. Cornelius was given a vision from God. Note five points.
 - a. Cornelius was in prayer when the vision came.
 - b. The vision involved an angel bringing a message from God.
 - c. Cornelius *stared at him* (atenisas), that is, fastened his eyes, gazed, focused his attention; he was startled, frightened.
 - d. Cornelius realized the angel of God was a messenger from God (see v. 30, “shining clothes”). He addressed him as “Lord.”
 - e. The message to Cornelius was twofold.
 - 1) His prayers and charity had come before God as a memorial (see *Seeking God*, Acts 10:1-6).

- 2) He was to send men to Joppa to see Peter and ask him what to do. Now note a critical point: despite Cornelius' enormous reverence and faithful service for God...
- he was still not doing enough.
 - something else was missing.
 - one thing was still lacking.

Note another fact as well: Cornelius was aware he still lacked something, very aware of the fact. *He had asked God what he still needed.* Despite all his reverence and good works, he still felt a lack, an emptiness; and he was begging God to fill that emptiness, to show him what he *still* had to do.

4. Cornelius was obedient to the heavenly vision and instructions. He sent two trusted household servants and his most trusted military orderly to find Simon Peter. Cornelius would seek the answer to his heart's need from a Jew.

Mat 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

John 7:17 “If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

John 15:10 “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

Rev 22:14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

ACTS 10:01–06 SEEKING GOD, LOST, SALVATION

Cornelius was not saved. Scripture says so (Acts 11:14). He was a man who...

- was good and very devout
- worshipped the true God
- feared and revered God
- did good, giving “generously” to charity
- prayed “regularly” — not just daily, not just often, *but regularly*

However, as wonderful as these things are, they are not what saves a person. Note a critical point often overlooked: Cornelius was *genuine* in his seeking after God. His prayers and charity ascended to God as a *memorial* (*eis mnemosunon*). The word means that the sincerity of Cornelius' heart caught God's eye. Cornelius was *seeking* God, desiring to please God, to know God and to do God's will. Therefore, God could not miss him. He had to see to it that Cornelius heard the message of salvation.

It is the person who seeks God whom God saves. God will do anything, do whatever is needed, so that the message of salvation is sent to the person who truly seeks Him. The person who seeks Him will find Him even if that person is in the deepest jungle on earth, completely isolated in the uttermost part of the earth. This is the promise of God.

Jer 29:13 *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

Mat 7:7-8 *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

Scripture describes people such as Cornelius, people who look at nature and at the world around them and see the true God: they seek God, yet they have never had the privilege of hearing the truth of the glorious gospel. (What an indictment against believers! Century after century has passed and the world has not yet been reached!)

Rom 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

Rom 2:14-15 *(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)*

Rom 2:26-29 *If those who are not circumcised [Gentile] keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God. □*

ACTS 10:01 CAESAREA

The city was built by Herod the Great between 25-13 B.C. and named for Augustus Caesar. It became the Roman capital of Palestine, the centre of Roman government and military headquarters in Palestine.

=> It was a seaport town about 30 miles north of Joppa.

=> It was a magnificent city — newly built, gleaming with the royal palace of Herod, magnificent buildings, and huge temples built to honour false gods.

- => It was the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:1).
- => It was the home of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8).
- => It was the city where Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:10-13).
- => It was the city to which Paul escaped (Acts 9:30).
- => It was the city where Paul was imprisoned (Acts 13:12-35).
- => It was the city Peter was to evangelize (Acts 10:1-48). □

II. *Acts 10:09–22 Breakdown of Prejudice in the Jew*

The breakdown of prejudice in the Jew, Simon Peter. The servants from Cornelius had almost reached the city of Joppa where Peter was. They would be approaching Peter soon with the request to visit and help Cornelius. However, Peter was not ready...

- to welcome these men
- to return with them to visit Cornelius
- to stay and share in the home of Cornelius

Why? Cornelius was a Gentile and Peter was a Jew. There was deep-seated racial discrimination between the two. Welcoming and visiting and sharing in the homes of each other was out of the question. And on top of that, there was a religious difference, a difference that was even more deeply seated in Peter's mind than the racial difference. Peter was just not ready for these Gentile men to approach him with the request to visit Cornelius the Gentile, not yet.

But God was ready. And it is God who makes the difference. God can break down prejudice. God can reconcile the Jew to the Gentile and the Gentile to the Jew. God can reconcile man to man; He can bring peace to men and between men. Note these facts.

1. Peter prayed often every day. This is seen in the fact that he was praying about the sixth hour (12 noon Jewish time). This was one of the three prayer hours practiced by Jews. Peter got alone and prayed at least three times daily.

Peter was such a man of prayer that God could intervene in his life and direct him, give him specific instructions. It was while he was praying that God spoke to Peter.

2. Peter was a mere man, very human. Despite his being the leader of Jesus' apostles — the great apostle to the Jews, a man of great spiritual maturity and depth, a great servant of the Lord, a minister highly esteemed — Peter was still just a man, a man who hungered and thirsted, ached and hurt, was weak and frail, prejudiced and too often wrong just like the rest of us.

The point is this: being saved and spiritually mature and called to serve God did not make Peter perfect. It did not free him from need and lack, nor from sin. Peter as a mere man was subject to hunger just as all men, and subject to the prejudices of his

environment just as all men — subject to the prejudices until God changed him. And praise God, He was about to change Peter’s prejudice against us, the Gentiles! If God had not changed him and his prejudices, we would still be lost and without Christ in this world.

3. Peter experienced a trance. The Greek says that “a trance [an ecstasy] came upon him”; that is, he was transported out of himself (ekstasis). His mind was so concentrated, so focused that Peter lost all sense of the world around him. He was swallowed up in the thoughts of God, transported mentally out of this world. It is something like a daydream, but a daydream so concentrated and focused that all contact with one’s surroundings is completely lost. It is a time of ecstasy in the presence of the Lord, receiving His Word, whatever He has to say to one’s heart.
 - a. The trance (ecstasy) was of heaven. Peter saw heaven open. Peter’s prejudice was encrusted and hardened. He had never known anything but prejudice within his environment except what Christ had demonstrated. *Peter did not think or know that he was prejudiced. He thought he was only standing against the unrighteousness and injustices of men, that he was to ignore and have nothing to do with ungodly and unjust men.* If Peter was to change and begin to reach out to the heathen, the ungodly and unjust, he had to know that the instructions were from heaven, from God Himself.
 - b. The large sheet upon which a meal was served was huge.
 - => It was a large receptacle, so large it looked like a *large sheet* (othonen), which in the Greek means linen cloth. This probably means it was white.
 - => The huge sheet had four corners that were knit, that is, that were held by four ropes and let down from heaven, descending to earth and being sat before Peter.
 - => The sheet contained all manner of animals.
 - c. The instruction to Peter was, “Get up, Peter. Kill, and eat.”
 - d. Peter refused, for the animals were common and unclean according to the laws of Jewish religion (see *Jews, Dietary Laws*, Acts 10:11-16). Note the enormous spiritual struggle Peter was going through.
 - f. Peter was clearly corrected: “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”
 - g. Peter experienced the event three times and then the trance ended with the platter being received up into heaven.
 - h. Peter was perplexed. While Peter was thinking about the trance and wondering what it meant, the men arrived downstairs and asked for him.
 - i. Peter’s sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s leadership is clearly seen from this point on. Note: it was the Holy Spirit who...
 - told him the men were downstairs.
 - told him to go “with them” (Peter did not yet know they were Gentiles)

- told him “do not hesitate”: do not waver, wonder, doubt, question the thing to be done.
- told him that He, the Holy Spirit, had sent the men after him

Note: Peter did not yet know the men were Gentiles. But the Holy Spirit had just told Peter exactly what to do. Peter could not question this fact. Peter was now ready to have his prejudice against Gentiles erased. Note also: Peter did not yet know the meaning of the trance. This would be made clear later.

- j. Peter received the Gentile servants. He obeyed the Holy Spirit, did exactly what the Spirit said. Peter even invited the men into the house to be his guests, an unheard of thing. (As a point of humour, imagine the kosher food they had that evening.)

Mat 13:16 “But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.”

Psa 25:5 Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long.

Psa 27:11 Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Psa 143:10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

ACTS 10: 11–16 DIETARY LAWS OF THE JEWS

The Jews had all kinds of dietary laws (see Lev. 11; 20:25-26; Dut. 14:3-21). There were certain foods they could and could not eat. The words *impure and unclean* (koinon kai akatharton) refer to being religiously or ceremonially unclean. The unclean animals were unhallowed, profaned. It was felt that eating them would not please God. Note two points.

1. The Jews were very strict, scrupulous in keeping the dietary laws. The laws were taught from earliest childhood, and a true Jew never ate an unclean animal. This can be clearly seen from Peter’s experience.

=> He told the Lord emphatically, “No.” And he said “no” three times right in the midst of a trance.

=> He told the Lord, “I have never eaten anything that is impure or unclean.”

Peter had never tasted an unclean food. Therefore, the Lord’s command to eat such food caused an enormous struggle for him. Jews were strict in observing the rules and regulations governing what they could and could not eat. They would never touch a food that was unclean.

2. Eating unclean foods was one of the major reasons the Jews considered the Gentiles *unclean* and unacceptable to God. It was one of the major reasons they

refused to have anything to do with the Gentiles. If a Jew had associated with a Gentile, the consequences would have been easily seen. The Jew would soon be influenced to try some Gentile food, and by so doing he...

- would become *unclean* religiously and ceremonially.
- would be breaking God's law.
- would lose his distinctiveness as being one of God's chosen people, one who follows and obeys God.
- would be eating meat that may have come from an animal sacrificed to an idol god. Once an animal had been sacrificed to an idol, the priests often sold the meat to merchants who made the meat available to the public. To eat meat offered to idols was considered idolatry, one of the worst offenses in the minds of a Jew.

Note: what God was saying to Peter is not contradicting God's Word to Israel. God had given Israel many laws...

- to make Israel distinctive, the people who followed and obeyed God's law.
- to keep Israel separated from the ungodly and unjust behaviour of other people, and from intermarriage.
- to give Israel guidance in taking care and protecting themselves both as a nation and as individuals. (Dietary laws protected their bodies and health.)

Israel was the custodian of God's Word to man. But when Christ came, God took another step, moved to another stage of His plan. Jesus Christ and His followers are now the custodians of God's revelation. It is no longer just Israel, just Jews who are...

- to receive, • to know, • to be responsible

...for God's revelation. It is both Jew and Gentile, all men everywhere. All men are now to rally around Jesus Christ and take the responsibility for proclaiming God's revelation (His Word, His law). It is no longer just Jews. It is all men of all nations — all who will follow Christ and take on the responsibility for making Him known. □

III. *Acts 10:23–33 Lessons for the Jew and the Gentile*

The confrontation and lessons learned by the Jew and the Gentile, the prejudiced of the world.

1. The preparation by Peter. He took six Jewish believers, orthodox Jews, with him (Acts 10:45; 11:12). Peter knew he was treading troubled waters by associating with Gentiles; he sensed he would need witnesses to what he was doing. Therefore, he was preparing himself against attack (see 11: 1f).

2. The preparation by Cornelius. Note...

- He was expectant, excited, eagerly waiting for their arrival.
- He had “called together his relatives and close friends.” There were many present.

Note also the faith of Cornelius. He *knew* Peter would be coming, that God would fulfil His Word (v. 6) and do what He had promised.

Psa 37:5 *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this:*

Psa 34:22 *The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.*

Isa 26:4 *Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.*

Thought 1. Cornelius was already witnessing by bringing people to hear the messenger from God.

3. The confrontation of the Jew and the Gentile, two men humbled by God.

- a. Cornelius had been humbled by the vision from God. He had been mulling over the experience for four days now, being humbled and prepared more and more to receive the Jewish messenger. When he confronted Peter, he was so humbled he prostrated himself before Peter in an act of deep reverence.
- b. Peter demonstrated humility as well. It was the custom to bow before men of high honour, showing reverence and respect for them. But God had humbled Peter too. Peter forbade the act, disallowed it. No man is to be idolized or revered in the sense of being held in awe. Peter rebuked Cornelius: “I am only a man myself.”

Thought 1. Jesus accepted such reverence and worship (see Mt. 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Lk. 5:8). and He accepted it from Peter himself (Mt. 8:2; Lk. 5:8). But Peter says no man is to bow or reverence another man, no matter who they are. We are all mere men, each one saved by God’s wonderful grace.

Mat 18:4 *“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

1 Pet 5:5 *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

4. The lesson learned by Peter. (See note, Acts 10:28-29.) Peter now knew that no man was impure or unclean. He now knew...

- that Christ had abolished the distinction between Jew and Gentile.
- that Christ had abolished the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile (see *Temple*, Jn. 2:14).
- that Christ had abolished *all* distinctions between men, whether racial, social or some caste system.

No man was to treat any other man with anything but love and care, mercy and forgiveness, concern and compassion. Peter's prejudice was wiped out, erased and overcome. It had been overcome by God. The door of salvation was about to be thrown open to the Gentiles forever.

Note Peter's reference to how it was unlawful for a Jew to associate with a Gentile (v. 28). This law was not in the Scripture. It came from the Scribal law (see *Teachers of the Law*, Lk. 6:2).

Mat 5:45 *“That you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*

Rom 10:12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

Gal 2:6 *As for those who seemed to be important — whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance — those men added nothing to my message.*

Gal 3:27-28 *For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Eph 6:9 *And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.*

5. The lesson learned by Cornelius was threefold.

- a. The man who truly seeks God moves God. Cornelius declared that God answered his prayer.
- b. The man who seeks God must listen to God and obey God. Cornelius declared that he listened and did exactly what God said, and that he did it immediately (v. 33).
- c. The man who seeks God must be receptive to the Word of God.

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

1 Th 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. ■

ACTS 10:28–29
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS, CHURCH,
PREJUDICE: GENTILES VS. JEWS

Jews were forbidden to eat certain animals because they were said to be unclean. This was a symbolic vision. God was teaching Peter that Gentiles (represented by the unclean animals) were acceptable to Him and were to be as much a part of His church as were Jews (v. 28). This is of extreme importance, for God was revealing that this had been His eternal plan for the church from the beginning. It was the revelation made “by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets” (Eph. 3:5). Note that “apostles” and “prophets” are plural. Paul was not the only apostle to whom the revelation was given. Peter later shared this experience with the Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10:24-29) and with the Jews at Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-11). Peter says very plainly in Acts 15:7-14 that God was calling out both Gentiles and Jews to make up the church.

This move on God’s part stirred one of the most revolutionary movements in human history. Both Jews and Gentiles were gripped with the deepest prejudice against one another (see Lk. 10:25-37. See notes, Lk. 7:4-5; *Dog*, Mk. 7:27; note, Eph. 2:11-12; see Gal. 2:4; Eph. 2:13-18; 2:19-22. See Rom. 9:1-11:36. See notes, Mk. 11:15; Eph. 2:14-15 on the structure of the Jewish temple.)

Note the open invitation among the Gentiles: “We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded...” (v. 33). The door for Gentile evangelism was thrown wide open! □