

The Gospel Opened to All

Key Verses: *“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.”*
—Acts 10:34,35

Selected Scripture:
Acts 10:34-48

time, Peter also had a vision which at first he did not fully understand. However, upon being instructed to go to visit Cornelius at his house, and learning of this Gentile's sincere faith, Peter realized that the time had now come for the Gospel to be opened to the Gentiles who were of the proper condition of heart to receive it, as had been evidenced by Cornelius.—vss. 9-23

Peter had been given the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” by Jesus. (Matt. 16:19) One of these symbolic keys he used on the day of Pentecost when, upon receiving

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which our lesson is taken is that of Peter's sermon to the house of Cornelius, who became the first Gentile convert. The theme of the apostle's words is salvation through faith, which “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17) In Acts 10:1-4, Cornelius was noted as a just, reverent, and devout man who gave many alms and prayed to God always. He was given a vision in which he was told to summon Peter to his house in Caesarea. (vss. 5-8) At the same

the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, he spoke of the opportunity which was now open for believing Jews to enter the heavenly kingdom. (Acts 2:14-41) A second key was used by Peter three and one-half years later, the time having come for the Gospel, and its hope of entering the heavenly kingdom, to be opened to Gentile believers. The apostle now realized the meaning of his vision, that the Lord had made Jews and Gentiles “both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition” which had previously separated them.—Eph. 2:14

The essence of the message which came to Cornelius was that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,” and was “raised again for our justification.” (I Cor. 15:3,4; Rom. 4:25) Those who, in faith, responded to this message, would be invited to become joint-sacrificers with Jesus, and have the hope of being sharers in Christ’s coming glory. (Rom. 12:1; 8:17) Cornelius’ heart had been touched. He believed in Jesus as his Redeemer and made a full consecration of his life to the Lord. God’s acceptance of Cornelius and his household was shown as the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they magnified God. (Acts 10:44-46) Peter then explained to Cornelius that, as disciples and followers of Christ, it would be proper for him and his household to receive water baptism, symbolic of immersion into Christ’s death, to which they had already given themselves.—vss. 47,48

Peter was granted the great privilege of using two “keys,” given him by Jesus, to open the door of the heavenly kingdom hope to all—both Jews and Gentiles—and now he had used both keys faithfully. The apostle now perceived the full meaning of the vision granted to him, and the statement, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common,” or “unclean.” (vss. 14,15) In Christ, the Apostle Paul states, “there is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile], ... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” “By his own blood” he has “obtained eternal redemption for us,” that we might “serve the living God.”—Gal. 3:26-28; Heb. 9:11-14 ■