

## **ACTS 10:24-48**

### **The Mystery Revealed**

As we continue to move through the book of ACTS, and now in **ACTS 10**, we see how God was truly at work to establish the Church.

One of the early things not fully understood, considering the way of the past with the Patriarchs, the prophets and the Law, was what would Christ's assembly, the church, look like? Who would it consist of? Who could be saved?

Having already laid the foundation of Christ's work and the instruction to the Apostles; God was now working in and through the life of Peter to bring the message of hope > **to all people.**

**To ALL who would call on the name of the Lord in faith.**

Understand, that historically in those days – this statement was not yet fully understood.

As far as the world could see, The God of the Israelites seemed to have shown favoritism for Israel and the Jewish nation.

- See how He had preserved them through the famines in Egypt.
- See how He had protected them, led them and provided for them during their progress to a land that was not their own but that God had granted to them.
- See how their small tribes were victorious time and time again through the might of their God.
- See how these people who had not been a nation, became a mighty nation.
- And even though they had been defeated and exiled from their lands for a time – here they were – and there was the temple to their God.
- And in their text, the writings of their prophets, was the promise of a Messiah, Deliverer, KING, who would rule the nations and be their God and they would be His people.

But God in all His mysterious ways had mysteries not yet fully revealed.

For all that the Jews were **and are** to God – they were not His ONLY people!

And the Messiah, Deliverer and King who came was the Revealer of that mystery!

As Paul would later succinctly declare, **Ephesians 3:1-6**

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.

To be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

Again, considering the history of the nation of Israel and the Jewish people with the One, True God – That He – in Sovereignty, Grace, Mercy and Love, would open wide the doors of Salvation and Eternal Life to **ALL** who call on HIS name in faith... is nothing short of marvelous.

And it was a lesson that Peter was still being taught, even as God was working through Him to make the mystery a reality!

Through Peter's *testimony of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ*, and through *his life of faithful living*, God was working wonders and miracles.

Through Peter's ministry, his service to God, lives were being changed. – Souls were being rescued from the fires of hell.

Friends, it is easy to look at these pillars of faith, John, Peter, Phillip, Paul and sell ourselves short.

*"Wow, I'm amazed at those pillars, but I could never be like that."*

**I am so thankful that isn't true – and I hope deep down you know it isn't.**

While we read how God was working through these men to build up the first church, throughout history we have examples of men who God worked through all the same to revive and build up the modern church!

Even in these "Modern" historical times.

**19<sup>th</sup> Century** – men like:

Charles Finney

Dwight Moody

Charles Spurgeon

**20<sup>th</sup> Century** – Men like:

Billy Graham – Charles Stanley – RC Sproul – Francis Schaffer

**20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> Century** – Men like:

John Piper – Alistair Begg, Chip Ingram – Vodie Baucham –

John MacArthur and Dennis Kries

**God is not done with the church yet.** > God is not done with **THIS** church yet.

**And God isn't done with YOU yet** – If you will stand on the principles of these great men → To commit themselves to the study of God's word and to prayer.

To living out their faith and to be obedient in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Who knows what amazing things God will accomplish through YOU, ME, and THIS church!

As we have discussed in the past two sermons from ACTS, God was working through the Apostle Peter in some amazing and unique ways!

- **Hear me, friends, the same can be said of you and I!**

If you and I will commit to **understanding** God's word – to **applying** God's word and to **sharing** God's word.

> God will work in and through you also, to make you **spiritually healthy**, to **grow** your faith, and **use** your faith to open the door of salvation to others.

As for Peter – As we have read in the book of Acts – God was working through him to open wide the door of salvation.

**Jesus had told Peter these days were coming; He just didn't understand what it meant at the time!**

We remember that Peter's greatest personal failure came during the trials of Jesus when he denied knowing Him three times.

But just days later, after the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, Jesus met with His Apostles on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and there he restored Peter, three times.

**Such is the way of the Lord!** In **2 Timothy 2:13** we read

*If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*

Which means, that despite our struggles or doubts, God's nature is unchanging, and his promises are secure.

The statement, "He cannot deny Himself" is an assurance of God's commitment to His character, His promises, and reliability.

### **Have you failed God? Turn back to Him.**

No matter how far you have strayed, with a single act from the contrite heart, all is forgiven.

This is what is meant in **1 John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

As for Peter – That morning he and some of the apostles were fishing on their boat when they encountered Jesus on the shore. Again, Peter leaps from the boat into the water.

As they were eating breakfast, Jesus was aware of Peter's repentant heart. What followed was a powerful lesson teaching us that **failure is not final** with Christ when we come to him in humility seeking His forgiveness.

### **John 21:15-17**

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He \*said to him, "**Tend My lambs.**"

He \*said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He \*said to him, "**Shepherd My sheep.**"

He \*said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus \*said to him, "**Tend My sheep.**"

In later centuries, leaders of the Church of Rome would use passages like this to elevate Peter to a supreme position of clergy as the First Bishop of the Church.

A position they later assumed for themselves in the role of the papacy claiming the Popes were the **apostolic successors** of that office. We will talk more about that next week when we address Peter application of the Keys of the Kingdom.

But there is no indication the Lord had any such elevation in mind for Peter.

It wasn't about ELEVATION – it was about RESTORATION.

The focus of the Lord was not on Peter's competence – but on his devotion.

- *Do you love Me?*

Three times Jesus asks the question – Three times Peter responds that he does.

Based on Peter's affirmation of devotion to Jesus– Jesus presents Peter with three commitments of devotion to those who love Jesus.

**Tend My lambs**– That is to gently nurture, care for the immature in Christ's flock (New believers)

**Shepherd My sheep** – As Jesus is our Chief Shepherd, He has appointed, called and gifted some as "under-shepherds" beneath Him, for the sake of the flock, to be overseers to guide, equip and protect the God's people.

**Tend My Sheep** – It is not only the immature who need to be gently nurtured and cared for. The whole flock, from the nursery to the nursing home, should be cared for and tended to and loved on.

**Following his failure, Peter probably thought he was finished.**

Jesus made it clear that in **repentance is restoration** – and God isn't finished with anyone who with sincerity of heart repents and commits to loving Him.

**And that goes for you and me to.**

It is also a reminder for the spiritual leaders of the church, called as shepherds for Christ's flock, to be imitators of Christ as we guide the church according to His instruction, command, and example.

And always remembering – those who come to Christ by grace through faith are HIS treasured possession, HIS lambs, HIS sheep, bought with the blood of Christ.

**I am sure on that morning sitting on the rocky beach of the Sea of Galilee that Peter wondered what these things would mean for him and how he would act on them.**

But here he was now.

**Having preached to his fellow Jews** after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and seeing many believe and commit by faith to follow Jesus of Nazareth as Lord.

**Having followed the work of Phillip the evangelist into the region of Samaria** and seeing many there believe and commit by faith to follow Jesus of Nazareth as Lord.

**Having gone into the town of Lydda** and through the power of the name of Christ seen a lame man walk.

**Having gone into the town of Joppa** and through the power of the name of Christ seen a dead woman stand up from her death bed. And sitting here now with these Gentiles from Caesarea who had bid him come to see their master.

Last week we left Peter at Joppa at the house of Simeon the tanner with three guests that had arrived from Caesarea with instructions from a man named Cornelius for Peter to come see him.

We met Cornelius in last week's sermon from the previous passages. He was a Roman Centurion, **an officer with authority of up to 100 legionnaires**, who was stationed in Caesarea, the city where the Roman governor over all Judea ruled from his palace.

Cornelius had sent two servants and a soldier to the house in Joppa where Peter was staying and "invited" Peter to come see him.

**Granted**, God had told Peter to trust the men.

**Granted** the men had said that Cornelius had been divinely directed to send for Peter and the man reportedly had a good reputation as being a righteous, God fearing and generous man among the Jews.

**But still, we have to remember; this was a walk of faith for Peter.**

Peter would need to stand on that commitment he had declared to Jesus on the shores of Galilee. *"Do you love me?" – "You Know that I love you, Lord."*

At times like these – **you and I have to walk by FAITH** – trusting God's leading, standing firm on that statement of commitment – *"You know that I love you, Lord!"*

#### **ACTS 10:23-24**

**Now on the next day he got ready and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup> On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.**

We read later that Peter brought 12 brothers in Christ with him on this mission.

- Perhaps to bear witness to the truth of things that Peter hoped to declare Cornelius.

We catch another glimpse into the heart of Cornelius here – Not only did HE desire to know more about God and the things he had heard about Jesus – But he wanted those he cared for to know them to!!

Cornelius was taking the matter seriously!

Peter didn't know what to expect when he arrived – **But a house full of Cornelius' relatives and friends probably hadn't been on the list!**

### **ACTS 10:25-29**

<sup>25</sup> When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet and worshiped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter helped him up, saying, "Stand up; I, too, am just a man." <sup>27</sup> As he talked with him, he entered and \*found many people assembled.

<sup>28</sup> And he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner; and yet God has shown me that I am not to call any person unholy or unclean. <sup>29</sup> That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So, I ask, for what reason did you send for me?"

This meeting brought to you by the word: **AWKWARD**

Peter was a humble Jew, a fisherman by trade, called to be a disciple and now a witness of the truth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Cornelius was a powerful military man.

**How easy it would have been for Peter's pride to grab hold of him as this powerful man bowed to him, prostrating himself in reverence to Peter!**

Instead, Peter levels the playing field.

We are all but mortal men and women. Honor? Sure. Respect? Absolutely.

But none of us deserves such submission as to prostrate ourselves one to another.

We most certainly honor one another, but submission and reverence of that level is reserved for **Christ alone!**

I am reminded of the time we studied in Acts 4, when Peter and John were arrested and brought before rulers and elders and commanded to speak and teach no more in the name of Jesus.

How quickly pride puffs up and power corrupts.

Peter's response was immediate and on point – **Acts 4:19-20** Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; or we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

And here Peter was now – continuing in that same conviction.

Let me ask you – what is holding you back from openly and boldly sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ?

- I don't feel adequate, equipped to talk about it.
  - Then engage with one of our bible studies and read your bible to gain the equipping that God has provided for you.
- I don't have time.
  - Do you have time to eat?
  - Time to work?
  - Time to do chores?
  - Time to play on your phone, read Facebook, watch TV
  - **It's more about priorities than time, isn't it?**
- I don't want to sound silly, goof it up, be made fun of.

**Charles Spurgeon wrote:** "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for."

Peter goes on to explain to Cornelius and his house full of guests that it is most unusual for a Jew such as himself to come into the home of a gentile.

**"You yourselves know that it is forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner;**

## **WHY IS THIS?**

The Jews were the descendants of Abraham, and those who had received the Law of Moses.

## **Gentiles were everyone else.**

From the Jewish perspective, any non-Jew were seen as outsiders, unclean, and uncivilized (*not having the law*)

Sometimes culturally referred to as "Greeks" and in other places referred to as "the uncircumcision" (since the law commanded the Jewish males to be circumcised).

The Lord Himself affirmed the distinction between Jews and Gentiles

In the Sermon on the Mount, in **Matthew 6:7**, Jesus stated, "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words"



Of course, Jesus had plenty to say about the flawed ways of the Jewish people as well, especially their religious leaders! Calling them blind guides and whitewashed tombs.

**But something NEW had come! > The MYSTERY was being revealed!**

That which had been called **unclean** – God had declared **clean**, through the blood of Christ! Even the **Gentiles**! And this was the point that God was making to Peter.

Peter concludes with the reasonable question- *So, I ask, for what reason did you send for me?"*

### **ACTS 10:30-33**

<sup>30</sup> *Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining clothing, <sup>31</sup> and he \*said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your charitable gifts have been remembered before God.*

<sup>32</sup> *Therefore send some men to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea.'*

<sup>33</sup> *So I sent men to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear everything that you have been commanded by the Lord."*

I love the eagerness, the expectation, the anticipation of this statement and the attitude of those gathered there that day.

- We are here, to hear about God.

We read in **John 12:21**, during the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry, He was speaking in Jerusalem and there came some Greeks, Gentiles who followed the way of the Jews, who came for the Passover but hearing the Jesus was there they came to the apostles with one simple request, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

How powerful the simplicity of the heart that desires to know God, to see Jesus.

The words of Cornelius spoke nothing of himself other than he was seeking God.

It had nothing to do with his position as Centurion or his culture as a Gentile.

He spoke only of his desire to know more about the Living God whom he knew enough about to fear Him and be kind to His people.

And not only this – the house was filled with likeminded Gentiles – Also seeking the living God – and with every eye on Peter and with ears open to hear the truth – they waited for Peter to speak.

I pray you are confronted with opportunities like these.

I pray that if anyone is seeking God and desires to see Jesus – that the evidence of your relationship with Him will be so apparent that they will seek you out.

I pray on that day that the Holy Spirit gives you the words of life they need to hear. And that through you – God’s word will be declared, and lives saved by the gospel.

### **ACTS 10:34-35**

<sup>34</sup> **Opening his mouth, Peter said:**

**“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.”**

This was the moment for Peter the mystery of salvation was fully revealed.

God shows NO PARTIALITY.

Again, as Paul would later write

To be specific, that the Gentiles are **fellow heirs** and fellow **members of the body**, and **fellow partakers of the promise** in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

All who come by faith may come freely. Men and women. Young and old. Rich and poor. In sickness and in health. From every tribe, nation and tongue. – ONE PEOPLE- in Christ –By grace- through faith.

**Faith in WHAT??** – The Gospel – the Good News- the Revelation of who Jesus of Nazareth is and what He has accomplished for those who believe.

And so – Peter took a breath – and presented the keys of the gospel to unlock the door of salvation to these with ears to hear.

### **ACTS 10:36-38**

<sup>36</sup> **“The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—**

**<sup>37</sup> you yourselves know the thing that happened throughout Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.**

**<sup>38</sup> You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.**

It would have been impossible not to have heard of Jesus of Nazareth in those days in those lands. So, Peter begins with what they already knew.

It had all begun with the prophet John, who came out of the wilderness, baptizing people, telling people to repent of their sins, for the Kingdom of heaven was at hand.

The foreshadowing had become a reality the day John saw Jesus of Nazareth near the shores of the Jordan River and declared, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Peter proclaims the witness of the signs and miracles, the teachings, and the character of Jesus of Nazareth.

He proclaims not only His life, but His trials, execution, and resurrection.

#### **ACTS 10:38-41**

**<sup>39</sup> We are witnesses of all the things that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.**

**They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.**

**<sup>40</sup> God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He be revealed, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people, but to witnesses who had been chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.**

**You may be aware** – Peter inclined- that this Jesus was put to death on a cross.

**But did you know** that God raised Him up on the third day and that He appeared, ALIVE, to many witnesses?

Witnesses, who ate food and drank beverages with Him as **PROOF** that this was no vision or spirit – but Jesus of Nazareth Himself raised up from the tomb.

#### **ACTS 10:42-43**

**<sup>42</sup> And He ordered us to preach to the people, and to testify solemnly that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify of Him, that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."**

This Jesus commanded us to proclaim His truth to others.

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."*

Jesus had declared His equality with God and the Father's appointment of the Son as Judge of the living and the dead.

### **John 5:21-23**

*"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. "For not even the Father judges anyone, ...*

*... but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*

All the prophets of the sacred writings declared the Christ would come – And Jesus of Nazareth alone has fulfilled all that was wrote of Him.

**Peter then shared the greatest hope ever bestowed on mankind. through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."**

The great lie Satan told Eve in the garden was that she would not die for disobeying God.

- But she did – as did Adam - and everyone one born of man from that day to this day.
- Because thus sayeth the Lord God - **all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God – and the wage of sin is death.**

But through faith in Christ Jesus –

- Instead of judgement – there is forgiveness.
- Instead of death – there is eternal life.

Jesus declared, **John 14:6** "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

And Peter himself had declared, **Acts 4:12** "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

### **ACTS 10:44-48**

**<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.**

<sup>45</sup> All the Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had also been poured out on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.

Then Peter responded, <sup>47</sup> "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?"

<sup>48</sup> And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

The immediate verification of that those who had heard had believed as their response in speaking with tongues and exalting God.

It was not always the case – *and it is not the case today* – because of the end of the age of the Apostles –

BUT IN THOSE DAYS – God often demonstrated the indwelling, the sealing of new believers, with the sign of tongues –

And in every case – the response of those who had been born-again, was to praise, exalt, and proclaim, the excellencies of God.

**What must I do to be saved?** The question is one echoed through the ages.

The answer always having to do with **faith**, and the **response** to that faith.

**FAITH**- believing, trusting on the message of the gospel –

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."  
**Acts 16:31**

"If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"

**Romans 10:9**

And the **RESPONSE** to that faith.

**Acts 2:38** "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Some try to make much of the sequence of events in these matters. I see them as two sides of the same coin.

***If you have believed in faith, then you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the natural desire of the born-again Christian is to repent of their sins and be baptized to make a public proclamation of our faith.***

In these foundational days of the church, we see those who by faith have believed, **responding** by speaking in tongues and exalting God.

Speaking in tongues was **a gift** of the Holy Spirit – for a season.

Baptism is **a commandment** from the Lord – for every season.

Those who spoke out in tongues proclaimed the excellencies of God – the redeemed of the church today submit to the waters of baptism for the same purpose!

In response to what Christ has done **FOR** us – In acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit **IN** us – and to proclaim the **EXCELLENCY** of our Heavenly Father.

### **Friends in closing-**

I pray that faithful followers of Christ like you and I, whether we be Jewish or Gentile by culture – **will stand in awe of the mysteries of salvation** revealed in our day.

ALL WHO CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED!

How amazing that the One, True, Holy And Living God would choose to save **ANYONE**– let alone you and I!

And to know that this door of salvation has been opened to **ALL** who **believe by faith** and call on the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

Understanding that **believing by faith, demands a response.**

Repentance of sin, obedience to His word, and the strong desire to hear the word of God and to see Jesus.

Finally, I pray that we have seen how God works through human agents

– people like you and me – **to proclaim His truth** and **to live out our faith** as **witnesses and living testimonies** to the glory of God.

Please do not let these points carry you only to the church doors.

If we want to see God working in our family, friends, and this town – then take these points out with you and be the **Ambassador that Christ** has called you to be. Amen?