



Sunday, April 15, 2012

Peter and Cornelius: The Scope of the Mission

Speaker: Joe Boot

Scripture: Acts 10

Sermon Notes:

1. This passage reveals the global scope of the Christian mission in which apologetics plays a role (1 Peter 3:15).
2. All believers are to defend as well as proclaim the gospel. Apologetics is not an elite task for scholars and pastors.
3. The church goes out in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit with the mission to reach the whole world (Acts 8; cf. Matt. 28).
4. In light of the universality of the gospel seen in Acts 10, we're instructed about how to respond to religious pluralism.
5. **Pluralism** teaches that many sincere beliefs and ideas are equally valid as paths to God, and religion is reduced to a subjective psychology. Pluralism leads to the abandonment of every core doctrine of Scripture.
6. If you share your faith for the purpose of conversion, you're seen by many today to be committing an immoral act of violence.
7. **Inclusivism** says that, although Jesus is the only Savior, the exclusive claims of Christianity that require faith in Christ are not fair. As long as you are sincere and follow a moral code you're saved by Christ, they say.
8. If the triune God is the only Author of salvation, then there is no thinking, believing, or doing, that will make us right with God outside of Christ.
9. It's the most frightening arrogance to put ourselves on the judgment seat in place of God to determine the conditions of salvation.
10. **Exclusivism:** The apostles were committed to the truthfulness of the gospel account, and its binding authority over all peoples for salvation.
11. Jesus is the only Saviour, and faith in Christ is necessary for salvation (cf. Acts 17:30).
12. There are many instances of God giving special revelations of Jesus to those who respond positively to what they already know by His general revelation.
13. If we're under the judgment of God it is because we don't obey what we already know about Him (Romans 1:18). Jesus says that from those to do not have, even what they have will be taken (Matt. 13:12). God is the only judge of those who have not heard the gospel.
14. The early church faced a hostile, pluralistic and immoral culture; our own challenges pale by comparison.
15. Peter is still wrestling over the transposed application of ceremonial holiness laws and the scope of Christ's salvation for the Gentiles.
16. Stupendously, God calls a Jew to declare salvation in Jesus to a Gentile. God is telling Peter that no person should be called unclean.
17. Peter learned apologetics on the job, as he was led and taught by the Holy Spirit. So too, God will teach us as we actively engage in sharing our faith.
18. We've idolatrously made our experience to be a god that trumps the Bible. God's Word always stands, modified in application only by further revelation from God Himself in Scripture.
19. Peter assumed the continuity, full validity and authority of the Word of God; but his cultural prejudices blinded him to God's revelation.
20. Present cultural assumptions do not trump Scripture. Scripture, not our experience, interprets Scripture.
21. When you share the faith, the message and the messenger can't be separated. We have a unique preparation from God ourselves, and at the same time God is preparing people for us to share the gospel with.
22. The Spirit of God is interested in the conversion of men and women – more than we are.
23. The gospel is delivered without partiality to every nation (Is. 19:24-25).
24. The privileges of Israel were so they could be a light to the nations.
25. We in the West have enjoyed much privilege; but we too, like Israel, will be cast off for faithlessness.

Application Questions:

1. In your own words define pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism.
2. How does Acts 10 set out the exclusivism of Christianity? What other texts confirm the exclusivism of biblical Christianity?
3. Is it morally permissible to talk about God as if we had the only correct view about Him? Explain.
4. Why are theistic assumptions, a sincere faith, and a general morality insufficient for salvation? Give scriptures texts to support your answer.
5. What should be our approach to learning and applying apologetics in daily life? What holds us back from sharing the faith?
6. *God's revelation is not a cooperative project between you and God.* Outline the authority of God's Word for our lives? Why do we resist?
7. How are we a privileged people, and what obligations are entailed?