

God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

Acts 15:7-9

Think About It

Some people have a powerful drive to be successful and to leave a grand legacy to those who will follow. Talk about the different kinds of "monuments" to themselves that people build, and consider why some people devote so much time, money, and energy to doing this. What do you think they are trying to achieve by building such monuments, and what is the lasting result?

DVD Teaching Notes (18 minutes)

The wonders of Caesarea

Caesarea: gateway to the Gentiles for the gospel

Legacies of stone: Herod and David

SESSION TEN

TOTAL COMMITMENT

Opening Thoughts (4 minutes)

The Very Words of God

Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

DVD Discussion (7 minutes)

1. What were some of the remarkable features of Caesarea during Herod's time?

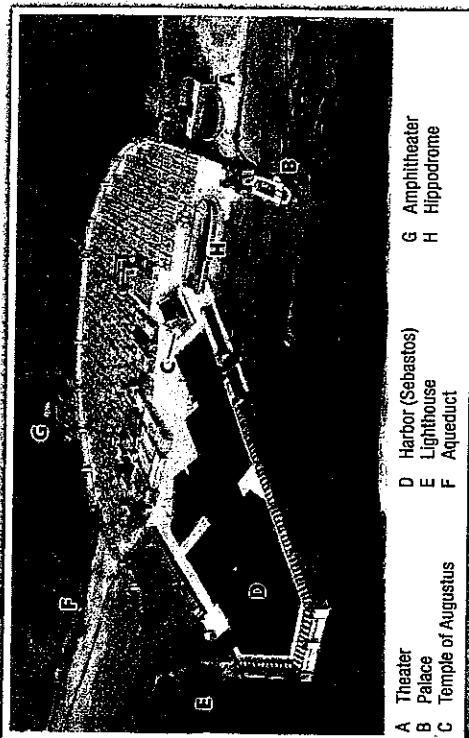
Which cultural statements did they make to the world of Rome? To the world of the Jews? To the world of the early Christians?

2. As you saw what remains of Herod's great city and consider what he lived for, what did you think about what people today (including yourself) value in life?
3. What does the image of the two stones — the marble fragment and the ordinary sling stone — mean to you?

DATA FILE

The Glory of Caesarea — Wonder of the Ancient World The Harbor

- No natural harbor existed, so Herod constructed a harbor using two breakwaters. The south breakwater was 600 yards (1,800 feet) long; the north breakwater was 300 yards long.
- The base for these breakwaters was built of forty-foot by fifty-foot concrete blocks that were poured under water at depths up to a hundred feet.
- The towering lighthouse at the harbor entrance could be seen for miles.
- Harbor facilities included vaulted storage rooms along the breakwaters.

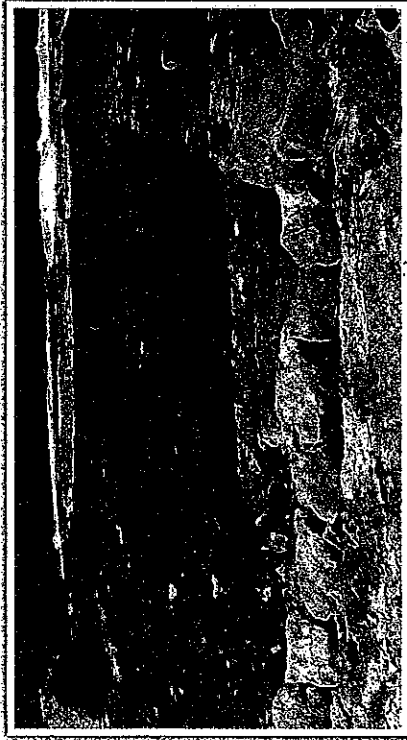


MAP OF CAESAREA

The Palace

- Located on its own peninsula, the palace included a small port from which Herod's visitors could enter the palace from the sea without ever stepping onto the city.
- The pool, a nature-defying "trademark" of Herod's palaces, was 115 feet long, sixty feet wide, and eight feet deep. It extended into the salty Mediterranean Sea, yet it most likely held fresh water.

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THE REMAINS OF THE POOL IN THE PALACE AT CAESAREA

- Herod welcomed his guests with luxurious rooms that included a large dining hall, hot and cold baths, and a semicircular colonnade that extended out into the sea.
- Most likely, Paul was imprisoned here for at least two years before he departed for Rome to appeal to the emperor.

The Theater

- Located outside the city, probably because the bawdy and obscene performances that took place there were so offensive to Jewish residents.
- An important tool in promoting Hellenism, a lifestyle that glorified human knowledge, accomplishment, and experience.
- Positioned so that prevailing breezes provided amazingly good acoustics, the theater could hold about four thousand spectators who sat on stone benches.
- May have been the site where Paul presented his magnificent defense of the gospel to Felix, Festus, Agrippa II, and Bernice.

The Temple of Augustus

- Dedicated to the goddess Roma and the "divine" emperor Augustus, it was one of the largest temples in the world at that time.
- Built on a great platform, the temple itself towered an additional one hundred feet.

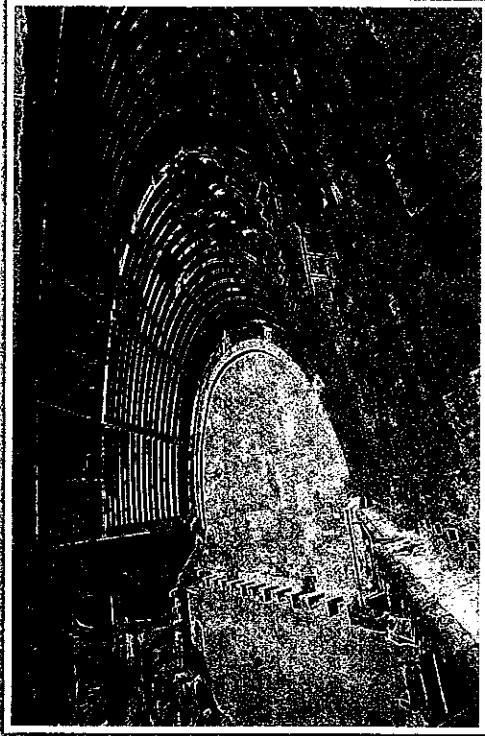
- It was coated with plaster made from marble dust, which made it gleam white in the sun.

The Hippodrome and Amphitheater

- It is not yet known if Herod built these facilities, but it is known that he promoted Hellenism by sponsoring sports festivals such as those that took place in such facilities.
- The games in these facilities were dedicated to pagan gods, were performed in the nude, and at times involved human bloodshed. They were considered by religious Jews to be immoral.

The Aqueduct

- Provided the city and Herod's palace with water from springs on the slopes of Mount Carmel, since there was no fresh water source in Caesarea.
- Extended nearly nine miles from the city to the base of Mount Carmel, plus had an additional six miles of shafts and tunnels that burrowed into the mountain.
- An amazing engineering feat, it carried water in a plastered channel (much of which rested on a series of arches) across a river and through a channel cut into the sandstone hills.



THE THEATER AT CAESAREA

Small Group Bible Discovery and Discussion (19 minutes)

Caesarea — Where Gentiles First Received God's Spirit

After Jesus' ascension, his disciples received the Holy Spirit just as the Messiah had promised. From the moment they received the empowerment of the Spirit on Pentecost morning, they began to testify of what God had done. It is unlikely that they had any idea how soon God would reveal their role in taking the message of salvation to the Gentiles. It is even more unlikely that they imagined King Herod's seaport at Caesarea would be the gateway for sharing the message of Jesus to the Gentile world. As you explore the following passages, think about what you might have felt and thought if you were a Jewish believer or a God-fearing Gentile during this time in history.

1. Acts 10 records a pivotal moment in the history of the Christian faith: the acceptance of believing Gentiles into the community of "circumcised" believers.
 - a. Who was Cornelius, where did he live, and what do we know about his lifestyle and religious beliefs? (See Acts 10:1 - 8.)
 - b. As Cornelius was responding to a message from the Lord, what unusual spiritual event was Peter experiencing? (See Acts 10:9 - 21.)
 - c. After Cornelius' messengers found Peter, what out-of-the-ordinary thing did Peter do? (See Acts 10:23 - 29.)

d. For what purpose did Cornelius realize God had brought Peter to Caesarea? (See Acts 10:30 - 33.)

e. What did Peter realize God was doing, and how did he reflect that in his message to the Gentiles who were with Cornelius? (See Acts 10:34 - 43.)

2. Even though God was asking Peter and Cornelius to do things that were unheard of for men in their position, how did each of them respond?

To what extent were they surprised by what God was asking them to do, and how did they know that this new direction truly was from God?

What do you notice about their attitudes toward what God was doing, and toward one another?

3. What amazing thing happened as Peter shared the message of Jesus with the Gentiles in Caesarea? (See Acts 10:44 - 48.)

How did the Jews who were with Peter respond, and why?

4. When God poured out his Spirit on the Gentiles, what happened within the early church? (See Acts 11:1 - 4, 15 - 18.)

How did the community of Christians resolve this controversial situation?

What do you learn from this situation that could help your faith community resolve controversies that arise, particularly controversies that arise out of ministry to people outside the traditional faith community?

Memorize

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:12 - 13