

History in the Making
Understanding the Book of Acts-Part Eighteen

Introduction: The next several weeks will reveal one of the most fascinating and instructional sections of Acts (Acts 9:32-12:25).

***RECORD OF THE GOSPEL/CHRISIANITY-MAKING IT'S WAY TO THE GENTILES!**

- ✓ After 2,000 years of successful Christian evangelism among nearly every ethnic group EXCEPT the Jews, we ask... will the Jews ever come to Christ in large numbers?
- ✓ This was not the question of the early church. Will the Gentiles ever come to faith in Christ?
- ✓ The next several messages will focus on how God accomplishes this task.

Remember:

- ✓ This was the thrust of the Great Commission

Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Luke 24:46-49 NKJV

- ✓ Also the emphasis of the Great Promise

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 NKJV

- ✓ This mission is inaugurated through Peter (9:32-11:18)
- ✓ After this mission begins so successfully, Peter will be challenged by the mother church in Jerusalem

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" Acts 11:1-3 NKJV

- ✓ Peter will explain what happened

When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." Acts 11:18 NKJV

TRUTH: Oh that we were so open to God breaking us out of our comfort zones!

Mission to Gentiles is set up by two miraculous events in the life of Peter.

I. The healing of Aeneas at Lydda by Peter (9:32-35)

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. 33 There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. 35 So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. Acts 9:32-35 NKJV

A. Last time we saw Peter he had returned from Samaria with John to Jerusalem

So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. Acts 8:25 NKJV

1. Apparently the persecution was breaking up (9:31)-“church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified.”
2. So Peter was apparently visiting the dispersed churches of Judea-one of those communities was Lydda-church made up mostly of Christian fugitives from Jerusalem
 - a. Lydda was 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem
 - b. Highway from Egypt to Syria and toward Joppa intersected
 - c. Predominately Jewish with an ethnic mix
 - d. There Peter meets with saints (church)

B. Meets Aeneas-bedridden for 8 years

1. Chronic illness-lower part of his body paralyzed
2. “Jesus the Christ heals you”

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach Acts 1:1 NKJV

3. Arise and make your bed

Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. Isaiah 35:6a NKJV

(Messianic promise)

C. Impact of miracle-all the way to the coast the power of Christ was proclaimed

So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. Acts 9:35 NKJV

II. The raising of Dorcas by Peter (9:36-43)

A. The ministry of Tabitha (Dorcas) in Joppa

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. Acts 9:36 NKJV

1. 11 more miles northwest on Mediterranean Sea-modern Tel-Aviv
2. Tabitha-famous for her charitable work on behalf of the poor

B. The death and funeral arrangement for Tabitha

But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Acts 9:37 NKJV

1. Cleanse body with oil and rinse with water
2. Outside Jerusalem not necessarily carried out the same day
3. Put in an upper room

C. Peter comes to Joppa

And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. Acts 9:38-39 NKJV

1. Since Peter was only 11 miles away, they asked him to come honor this saint
2. Met by mourning of widows, wearing the garments that Tabitha had made

NOTE: Orphans/Widows so important to the New Testament story and the kingdom message-marginalized

D. The miracle in the upper room

But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. Acts 9:40-41 NKJV

1. Luke he had seen Jesus do put them all out
2. Total dependence on God-knelt and prayed
3. His command to her-"Tabitha arise"
 - a. Aramaic-"Tabitha qum"
 - b. Mark 5:41 "Talitha (little girl_ qum"
4. Sat up-opened eyes
5. Takes her by the hand-presents her alive

E. Great news spread

And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. 43 So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner. Acts 9:42 NKJV

F. Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with Simon

So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner. Acts 9:43 NKJV

About Simon the Tanner

- ✓ Lived by the seaside-used salt water in his work-Peter was a fisherman-good place to stay
- ✓ Probably lived a ways out of town-good degree of uncleanness attached to a tanner's work because it involved contact with skins of dead animals

III. The role of the miraculous in evangelism

- A. In Acts-miracles accompany about half of the occasions of effective preaching of the Gospel (other occasions they do not)

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen. Mark 16:19-20 NKJV

B. Avoiding the extremes

1. Some despise and deny the role of the miraculous today in inspiring or evoking saving faith
 - a. Days of miracles past
 - b. Only by faith
2. Some see no work of God at all without accompanying signs/wonders-leads to seeking them rather than the miracle worker

C. Balancing truth

1. Saving faith must not rest on the impression the miracle has made but on the truth of the message to which it points! (Jesus is alive and never changing-Hebrews 13:8)
2. Luke knew well that miraculous signs can be wrongly interpreted by the unregenerate

But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." Luke 11:15 NKJV

In Acts 14 people in Lystra will think Paul is a god

3. When miracles do occur with the preaching of the gospel-we must interpret God's acts by His word, putting down misunderstanding and exalting Christ!

Conclusion: Miracles were an answer to the prayer we should pray!

Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." Acts 4:29-30 NKJV

God's answer...

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:31 NKJV