

Peter's Ministry Acts 9:32—43

- After Paul was saved, we now turn our attention back to Peter.
 - It's interesting that the first 8 chapters are about Peter, 1 Chapter about Paul, 2 Chapters about Peter then the rest of the book is about Paul.
 - Since Acts is a transition book (as agreed upon by almost all fundamental Christians) then it seems the highlighting of Peter at the beginning and Paul at the end would be a significant clue as to the defining of the transition.
 - The key to understanding Acts is in defining what is the transition and when did it happen.
 - Many understand that Acts transitions from God's dealings with Israel as a nation to God's dealing with individuals in the Church, the Body of Christ but misplace the beginning of the transition.
 - Others say Paul was given further revelation but there has been only one gospel, this in spite of the fact that Paul makes it absolutely clear that the gospel can not be changed for any reason.
Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

Aeneas

- Aeneas was a man bedridden for 8 years from Lydda (20 miles NW from Jerusalem).
 - It's interesting to note that Israel stoned Stephen about 8 years ago so this incident, and the one following, may be significant in how God views Israel.
 - This incident is possibly saying that Israel is now crippled with little chance to move on unless they turn to God for her strength.
 - Since I believe it is too late for national Israel to receive the promised Kingdom, this incident could be possibly speaking to individual Israelites saying it is not too late for them to be assured a place in the Kingdom.
 - Of course, we can not say for sure that this is what the Bible was saying because the Bible did not spiritualize this for us.
- This event shows God is still dealing with Israelites and using sign gifts to cause them to believe.
 - Many did believe because of this miracle.
- We see Peter pointing to Jesus Christ but no mention of water baptism nor of the gifts of the H.S.

Tabitha

- Peter was then called to Joppa (12 miles NW of Lydda).
- The sign gifts were still being used to get people to believe and again, many did.
- This event may also speak of the reviving Israel needed through Jesus Christ. Though they are dead, they can have life through Jesus Christ.

Which Gospel?

- What Gospel was Peter preaching when many were saved after these events in Lydda and Joppa?
- The only thing we are told is that Peter healed in the name of Jesus Christ and that many believed in the Lord.
 - It seem that there is a departure from the salvation message we see in early Acts where they needed to be baptized and then the Holy Spirit was given along with a display of sign gifts.
 - Here, we see Jesus Christ emphasized but no call to be baptized and no mention of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- I believe those saved were saved into the Body of Christ even though Peter did not preach a Gospel including the death, burial and resurrection as Paul would preach by the time 1 Corinthians 15:1—4 was written.

Cornelius

- Who was Cornelius?
 - He was a Roman centurion, in charge of at least 100 soldiers (probably several hundred) made up of volunteers from Italy.
 - He was a devout man who feared God and proved it by giving donations to the Jews and praying often.
 - He was also a fair man with a good report among the Jews.
 - Many claim he was a proselyte, however, a true proselyte was as Jewish as one can get without being nationally a Jew. This meant circumcision, and obedience to the Law. There is no evidence that a proselyte was considered unclean and therefore shunned by the Jews as we see with Cornelius.
 - In spite of all of this, he was not a believer.
 - There are many devout, God-fearing people today who are not saved, even though many think they must be. However, God knows the heart.
- Story highlights
 - Cornelius was praying at 3pm as was probably his custom. This is the same time that temple prayer occurred (Acts 3:1).
 - An angel of the Lord came to him and said his prayers have been heard and that he was to send for Peter who was in Joppa (about 35 miles south).
 - Cornelius sent two servants and a soldier.
 - The next day Peter went up on the rooftop to pray around lunch time and fell into a trance.
 - He saw a sheet being lowered three times with all kinds of unclean animals with the command to eat them. Peter refused because he never would defile himself by breaking the Law.
 - Three times the voice said, “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy”.
 - Peter was greatly perplexed by what he had seen. While pondering the vision, God told him that three men were looking for him then the men Cornelius sent arrived and asked for Peter.
 - The next day they went back up to Caesarea
 - Four days had elapsed since Cornelius’s vision.
- Peter’s sermon
 - He told Cornelius and his household that “in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him” (verse 35).
 - He preached Jesus Christ as the One who gives peace (verse 36).
 - He preached the miracle of Jesus, His death and resurrection (verses 37—40).
 - He preached Jesus Christ as Judge (as King in the Millennial Kingdom) (Verse 42).
 - He preached that those who believe on Him will have forgiveness of sins.
- The Holy Spirit given to Gentiles
 - While Peter was preaching, the Holy Spirit interrupted him and came upon Cornelius and those listening to the message.
 - He came upon them in the same manner as He did upon the Jews in Acts 2.
 - With this, Peter ordered them to be baptized.

- Dispensational significant
 - We again see the significant change in order. Instead of water baptism then the Holy Spirit, we have the Holy Spirit come upon them then Peter baptizes them.
 - Since God had already declared the Gentiles clean (while at the same time doing away with elements of the Law) there was no need for them to be baptized as the Jews were in early Acts.
 - Peter called for them to be baptized because that was all he knew and wasn't yet told not to.
 - This is another step of moving towards Paul's ministry with the Gentiles. Peter, as head Apostle and leader of the Hebrew church, needed to know from God that things were changing. He then was responsible to report these changes back to those in Jerusalem (Chapter 11).
 - This event is not at all connected to the "Great Commission". Instead, God had to give Peter a new commission for him to even consider going to a Gentile. This new commission was in response to Israel rejecting her Messiah and not indication that their work was now done in Jerusalem.
 - Other viewpoints—Baker
 - Baker sees these event in light of the Kingdom.
 - Cornelius (and Paul) were saved into the Kingdom as evidenced by the Kingdom-sounding gospel and the baptism for washing away sins.
 - Cornelius is an example of Gentile salvation in the Millennial Kingdom. When God judges the nations in Matthew 25:31—48 he rewards those who do righteous acts toward Israel during the Tribulation period with a place in the Kingdom. Those who do not do the righteous acts are thrown into hell.
 - Cornelius was not saved but was rewarded for his righteous acts.
- However:
- Those brought into the Kingdom seem to have the ultimate test of their salvation. When Satan is released, most of the world will turn against God and be cast into hell. Those entering the Kingdom would be considered saved but they will need to endure all the way to the end.
 - Even though the Gospel preached was very Kingdom oriented, the main message is Jesus Christ. The Grace message was still in its infancy and would be fully developed as it was revealed through Paul over the next 20 years.
 - The inclusion of baptism and language that sounds like Kingdom talk is not surprising realizing Paul was saved only 5 years earlier and had only spent a few days with Peter in Jerusalem before this event with Cornelius.
 - I believe God formed the Body with Paul's conversion but it took many years for the complete revelation of that event and what it means for us.
- Other viewpoints—non mid-Acts
 - If the Church was formed at Acts 2 then why did it take 8—10 years for the first Gentile to be introduced into the Church? Since the Body of Christ is composed of both Jews and Gentiles without regard to their heritage it seems odd that it took this long to get the Gospel to them.
 - If the Church was formed in Acts 28, why were there many Gentiles being incorporated into what would have been the Hebrew Church when they did not need to follow the Mosaic Law and would have been considered unclean. This would have been unacceptable to the Jews.
 - By beginning the Church at Mid Acts, these two problems go away. The Church began with Paul and shortly after Peter is told to meet with this Gentile. This was against their Law and Peter wanted nothing to do with it. God told him that He had purified the Gentiles and it was now acceptable to associate with them.
- Acts 10:28** And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

Originally taught at Bethesda Sunday School March 29, 2009