

Acts 9:32 to 10:33 – God Brings Light to the Gentiles Through Peter -

A Major Turning Point in the Book of Acts

1. **INTRODUCTION:** this section tells of the Lord's official induction of the Gentile world into the church, through the ministry of the Apostle Peter. Jesus continues building His church.
 - a. **Background:** Acts 1:8b, *"and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth."*
 - i. Saul's persecution had served to spread the gospel out from Jerusalem
 - ii. **Takeaway:** No one can thwart God's purposes! Even the enemies of God (Saul and Jewish Leaders) in the end have actually served His purposes.
 - b. **Historic & Geopolitical context:** Occurs during the period of peace described in Acts 9:31 after Saul's persecution had ended; probably about 6 years after Pentecost
2. **PETER AT LYDDA: ACTS 9:32-35**
 - a. **Peter's Ministry Role:** Peter finds himself in the role of itinerant pastor, fulfilling his commission given by Jesus in John 21 to "tend my lambs...shepherd my sheep."
 - b. **Geography & Culture:** Lydda was about 25 miles NW of Jerusalem, at the site of the modern Tel Aviv airport. It was a North/South and East/West trade route crossroads.
 - c. **The Healing of Aeneas:** the works of God manifested in Aeneas, leading to opportunity for the gospel. The fruit of this miracle was the salvation of the entire village.
 - d. **Moving Out from Jerusalem:** Parallels the work that God is going to be doing through Peter, in bringing Gentiles in to be equal partakers in the salvation of the gospel.
3. **PETER AT JOPPA: ACTS 9:36-43**
 - a. **Geography & Culture:** Joppa was 8 miles WNW of Lydda, on the Mediterranean coast. It is known as "Jaffa" on modern maps, in the Tel Aviv coastal area.
 - b. **Joppa in the Old Testament:** Joppa appears in Jonah 1:3; also sent on a mission by God to Gentiles. Peter responds more positively than Jonah to God's call.
 - c. **Tabitha, an Example of Loving Others for Christ:** the Scripture honors Tabitha for her works of charity and good works which she "continually" did (v.36)
 - i. **Application:** we can all learn about the impact of loving people for Christ from Tabitha's example. Simple acts of love count eternally and lend credence to the gospel.
 - d. **Tabitha Raised from the Dead:** Again, much fruit comes from this miracle as it gives great opportunity for the gospel and many believe.
 - e. **Moving further out from Jerusalem:** As Peter travels further, God is preparing him for the events of Ch. 10 in granting "repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18) to Gentiles.

4. PETER AND CORNELIUS - ACTS 10:1-33

- a. **Acts 10:1-8 - Cornelius' Vision:** An angel from God instructs Cornelius to send for Peter to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to this Gentile family.
 - i. **Geography & Culture:** Caesarea Maritima was the Roman capital city of Judea, on the coastline about 30 miles north of Joppa; a prized Roman city with very Roman culture.
 - ii. **Jew/Gentile Barrier:** Peter is a religiously-minded Jew, circumcised, obedient to ceremonial laws and traditions about clean and unclean; Cornelius is a Roman from the Italian homeland with pagan roots, uncircumcised, unclean regarding Jewish laws.
 - iii. **Cornelius, a God-Fearing Gentile:** Cornelius had come to recognize and fear the true and living God of the Jews. But he still needed to hear the gospel of Christ to be saved.

- b. **Acts 10:9-16 – Peter's Vision:** God synchronizes Peter's vision with Cornelius' vision the day before. Peter goes up to the roof to pray and sees a vision from the Lord
 - i. **Application:** if we want to be led by the Lord to do His will, we need to be praying and seeking. We are commanded to pray continually.
 - ii. **The Heavens Open Up.** *"In Scripture, the heavens open up only for divine activity, so Peter understands the significance of the sight."* ¹
 - iii. **The Vision Occurs Three Times.** *"When something happens three times to Peter, it is a fixed certainty. His denial was underlined by its repetition; his restoration and commissioning likewise. Now here, the repetition displays that this is no mistake or misunderstanding."* ²

- c. **Acts 10:17-23a – Cornelius' Messengers Reach Peter:** At just the right moment, Cornelius' men reach the house of Simon the Tanner and ask for Peter.
 - i. **Peter Doesn't Understand the Vision:** But the Holy Spirit instructs him to go with the three Gentile men who are looking for him; the vision's meaning becomes clearer.
 - ii. **Peter Extends Hospitality to Gentiles:** Peter overcomes his predisposition & invites the men in to dine & lodge at the house until their return journey the next day.
 - 1. **Application:** *There are times when we need to overcome our own predispositions toward certain others and reach out for the sake of loving them for Christ.*

- d. **Acts 10:23b-33: Peter Arrives at Cornelius' Home.** On the journey north, Peter has more time to reflect on the vision and comes to fully comprehend its meaning.
 - i. **Isaiah 49:6:** *"...a light to the nations..."* and **Luke 2:30-32:** *"a light for revelation to the Gentiles"*
 - ii. **Peter Enters:** He corrects Cornelius' misplaced worship
 - iii. **Peter Opens His Heart to Them.** Peter understands that as the Lord has accepted them, so must he, for the sake of the gospel and obedience to the Lord.
 - 1. **Application:** We must not close our hearts to God's people (1 John 4:20)
 - 2. **Takeaway:** This story is part of our identity as Gentile believers. Knowing this story strengthens our faith and praise to our Savior.

1. Mohler, R. Albert Jr., 2018. *Acts 1-12 For You*. The Good Book Company. p.139

2. Same as above, p.140