

LESSON ELEVEN

(9:32 - 10:48)

In Lydda, 9:32-35

32 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. 35 And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord.

V. 32 - **Lydda** - This city, the O.T. Lod (I Chron. 8:12; Ezra 2:33) was in the center of Jewish influence in N.T. times, and more so after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD. 70. It was between Jerusalem and the coast city of Joppa. Luke's narrative diverts our attention from Paul to Peter and yet relates each apostle to the same point: the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Church on equal terms with the Jews.

V. 33 - Luke normally describes physical problems somewhat more in detail than others, perhaps indicating his (supposed) medical background.

V. 34 - Peter, at times, reflects the true Christian attitude: only in Jesus does he do anything. Aeneas is instantly healed.

V. 35 - The effect of doing things in Jesus' name: people are given reason to trust in Christ. In Lydda and throughout the Plain of Sharon (some 30 miles long) this was the case. Of course, Philip had previously preached in this general area, 8:40.

In Joppa, 9:36-43

36 Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas or Gazelle. She was full of good works and acts of charity. 37 In those days she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him, "Please come to us without delay." 39 So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, rise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

V. 36 - Joppa was the seaport most used by people in Jerusalem. It was on the southern edge of the Plain of Sharon, with Caesarea on the northern edge. It is modern Jaffa.

Tabitha is Aramic (Hebrew) and Dorcas is Greek. Her life was characterized by concern for others in certain ways (even as ours can and should be). She, like Jesus, did good (note Gal. 6:7-10).

V. 37 - Burial customs varied, but generally the person was prepared and interred on the same day as the death.

V. 38 - Note how wide spread the Church was and how well-known the power of the apostle (though the text doesn't say why they called for Peter). Lydda was about 9-10 miles southeast of Joppa.

V. 39 - Luke paints a vivid picture of the many whose lives had been touched by Dorcas. She made all kinds of clothing, both outer and inner garments, which was the customary designation for clothing in that time. Wonder how people will react when we die and what they will remember about us? Will our (good) works follow us (Rev. 14:13)?

V. 40 - Peter's reaction was much like that of Jesus when Jairus' daughter was healed (Matt. 9; Mark 5; Luke 8). The healing was just as complete as all others. In the O.T., Elijah prayed before raising the son of the widow of Zarephath; and Elisha for the Shunammite's son (I Kings 17; II Kings 4).

V. 42 - Same cause - same effect as before. The miracle was a means to evangelization and preaching of the Word. Notice the designation of the word "saint" to the brethren in Joppa.

V. 43 - One interesting thing is that Peter would live with a person who engaged in such business as dealing with things dead.

many days - the same as describes Paul's stay in Damascus, V. 23; and in 8:11; 27:7.

In Caesarea, 10:1-48

10 *At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." 4 And he stared at him in terror, and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa, and bring one Simon who is called Peter; 6 he is lodging*

with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.” 7 When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those that waited on him, 8 and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 The next day, as they were on their journey and coming near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 And he became hungry and desired something to eat; but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance 11 and saw the heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” 14 But Peter said, “No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has cleansed, you must not call common.” 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

17 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood before the gate 18 and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. 19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 Rise and go down, and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them.” 21 And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?” 22 And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house, and to hear what you have to say.” 23 So he called them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went off with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his kinsmen and close friends. 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered; 28 and he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”

30 And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, 31 saying, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter; he is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the seaside.’ 33 So I sent to you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

34 And Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; 41 not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

44 While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on even the Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 “Can any one forbid water baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

V. 1 - Caesarea is near the north end of the Plain of Sharon, some thirty miles north of Joppa, and some 23 miles south of Mt. Carmel. Caesarea was named by Herod the Great in honor of Augustus Caesar. Herod had an extensive rebuilding program in Caesarea. It was a popular city for Romans, most of the procurators making it their official home.

Cornelius was apparently doing most of the things that would make him acceptable to a Jew, yet was clearly regarded as outside the Jewish circle of acceptance, which, of course, sets the stage for the reaction of Peter, then of those brethren with him, the Jewish church at large as well as the Gentile world. Coupled with Paul's call and commission to go to the Gentiles, this incident helps us see how universal in nature the church is.

V. 3 - Luke's account seems to say that the supernatural vision of an angel was just that, and not the actual presence of an angel. However, v. 34 clarifies this verse with the statement of Cornelius. God answered his prayers through a human agent, Peter.

V. 4 - Cornelius may or may not have said, “lord”. He may have thought (and said) “Sir.” The Greek term could be used either way.

memorial - the Greek term was used in reference to the oblation/offering of frankincense that the Hebrews offered to God. Jesus used it to describe Mary's offering of ointment (Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9). The word for “alms” can be seen in Matt. 6:2; Acts 3:2.

V. 6 - Peter was still in Joppa after many days as a guest of Simon. Some of his Jewish training about unclean things (Lev. 11; Num. 19) was seemingly being ignored. However, his reaction to the Lord's command brings out the fact that he still felt that he was still under those restrictions.

V. 8 - **related** - The basic Greek word has the idea of explain, or exegete. Cornelius surely felt complete confidence in what he had experienced; and acted as any other good soldier would with an order.

V. 9 - Housetops were ordinarily flat, and were thus utilized for many things of family life, such as sleeping, etc. Note here Deut. 22:8.

V. 10 - Peter must have intended only to pray a little while, since it was noon, and the meal was being prepared. It was an appropriate time for such a vision.

a trance - The Greek term is not the word used for vision in v. 3. However, the same word in v. 3 is used in v. 17 to describe the experience. Paul had a like experience in 22:17. The verb form is often translated as “amazed” in the Gospels. See also Acts 3:10.

V. 12 - The sheet obviously contained food not kosher for Jews. See here Matt. 15:1ff; Mark 7:1ff; I Tim. 4:1-5. But Peter (and all Jews had to unlearn what was ingrained and as natural as breathing. Fish are not represented, although some were unclean (like catfish).

V. 14 - Peter is a good example to consider: one’s knowledge may exceed one’s will to do. A person may be emotionally unable to do what is perfectly permissible, etc. Luke records that when Jesus appeared to the people in the upper room, they “disbelieved for joy,” Luke 24:41.

V. 15 - The command was plain: quit calling unclean what God has declared clean.

V. 17 - Peter really was perplexed, which indicated that one’s awareness of facts and/or commands may not be equal to understanding of said facts.

V. 19 - Peter was really considering what the vision meant. The Holy Spirit had to command him not to doubt or question what was about to happen, and to make it plain that the whole affair had been arranged by God.

V. 20 - Another construction of a Greek participle (arise) with an imperative (go down) with the participle taking on an imperative meaning, as in Matthew 28:19.

V. 22 - Note that Peter is to have “words to say” to Cornelius. Hence, what Jesus promised to Peter (and the apostles) about the direction of the Holy Spirit when they spoke will be true in v. 34ff. We also need to be aware that Cornelius, like Saul of Tarsus, was in many ways very godlike, but yet quite lost in sin. Furthermore, each man heard God’s plan through a human agent. Not even an “experience” would or could make him saved.

V. 24 - The fourth day Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, who was expecting him.

V. 25 - While Jesus accepted worship from people (Matt. 8:2; Luke 5:8), Peter knew better than to do so. Most Jews, however, would have reveled in the action of Cornelius, considering that it was but their just due.

V. 28 - The point Peter had to learn was that it was not unlawful now for a Jew to fellowship with a Gentile. God had wiped away the distinctions inherent within the O.T. law system. Moreover, as his speech will reveal, the common denominator of faith will make of the “two one flesh,” Ephesians 2:14-18. The same lesson is taught many places in the N.T., such as Rom. 3:27-31; Gal. 3:26-29 etc. The fact is, that God had always honored faith, in whomsoever it was, as is indicated by Jesus in Luke 4:16ff. See also Matthew 15:21-28. By grace through faith was always true, and was now being presented in its intended application.

V. 29 - Peter has come a long way in his knowledge. He will have trouble always being consistent in application (Gal. 2), however, since he was like we are at times. It is only fair to say, though, that Jesus’ ministry was basically to the Jews only. His disciples would rather easily interpret his commands about evangelization of the whole world in this light. God now moves in a clear and convincing way to help Peter (and others) see clearly the scope of the great commission.

V. 33 - Cornelius stands ready to receive whatever Peter will say, because he is thus minded. He was like so many others who longed for a word from God, as is evident by the great numbers who turned to the Lord.

V. 34 - The truth that Peter discovered had always been so - God never acted unjustly (i.e., respected) anyone over others. Even the choosing of the Jewish race was for a purpose: through it, God would bring the Messiah into the world. However, that didn’t preclude the fact that the Jews could, through lack of obedience of faith, become as a non-Jew, and vice-versa (see Rom. 2:25-29). Paul used the same word in Rom. 2:11 (also Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25) that Peter uses to describe the essential character of God: He is not a respecter of any person. Romans 11:32 declares that God declared all to be sinners, so that He might have mercy upon all. What the Jews needed to learn was what Peter was learning: that they, although blessed in many ways (Rom. 9:1-5), did not have any special place in God’s eyes in regard to salvation.

V. 35 - Note: the person acceptable to God is characterized by two things, 1) maintains a proper relationship with God (i.e., fear) which effectually allows him to be unafraid of God, and
2) habitually does righteousness (note righteousness comes from God, but it can also be done). The simple fact is: a Gentile does not need to become a Jew to become a Christian and a Jew is not helped at all by his Jewishness.

V. 36- Peter related that it had always been God's plan to save men, any men, who would trust in Christ; the Lord of everyone (not just Jews). The message preached was of peace (i.e., "whole" relationship with God) by means of Jesus' sacrifice (a reconciled relationship to God of those who were enemies of God). Don't overlook this most important word: peace (shalom). Be alert to the fact that the recorded messages of Jesus do not mention this word, but the intended result of the preaching He did was to restore what was missing: peace (with God). Read Luke 19:41-44. It is good to meditate upon the character of a God who loved, not hated, his creation so much that he sent his only son to die for that creation!

V. 37 - The public proclamation of the word was marked from John's ministry, who was the forerunner of Jesus.

V. 38 - Peter affirmed that God anointed Jesus in two special ways: with power and the Holy Spirit. Of course, the name Christ means "anointed," but this seems to indicate special things from God.

It is of interest that Peter stated that Jesus healed those oppressed by Satan, even though we are not told specifically that everyone Jesus healed was in need of healing because Satan was oppressing them. It seems doubtful if Peter meant that those whom Jesus did not heal but who needed healing were not oppressed by the devil. The most probable point is this: Jesus' ministry gave evidence not only of the total import (he did good, not bad - see Mark 3:4), but also that God was evidently working in his ministry.

V. 39 - Witnesses to the aforementioned facts were the apostles. This is an important point in relationship to the 120 who, some say, were equally blessed at Pentecost with the apostles.

V. 40 - The contrast: Jews vs. God. Indeed, the Jews were Jesus' own people (John 1:11), but not in respect to God's eternal plan for redemption. As stated above in v. 34, 35, God had no "favorites" in regard to who could be saved, for faith made all men equal (i.e. anyone who believed could be redeemed). Faith produces a certain type or character that makes said person pleasing to God. In this matter, God rewards/respects not persons per se, but the character of persons.

V. 41 - To make the historical facts more credible, Peter gives testimony of his personal knowledge about the resurrected Jesus: he was not a ghost or hallucination. The accounts in Luke 24 and John 21 are corroborated by Peter (the disciples ate and drank in company with Jesus). They were the best prepared to give witness to Jesus' resurrection, since they knew him too well to be easily deceived by an impostor.

V. 42 - As shown in 2:23, God had specifically confirmed that Jesus was the Christ by various means, with enough evidence to convince the honest inquirer. Another important facet of Jesus: He was designated to be the judge. Hence, one needs to make peace before the judge is faced.

V. 43 - The emphasis is like Romans 3:22; and John 20:30-31. Note that the Greek carries the idea of a life of faith, habitually, constantly, the normal state of affairs.

Perhaps the ironical note is that the Jews had, as a group, missed the prophets' message about Jesus. Peter will reiterate this very point in I Peter 1:10-12, and mentioned it to those in the temple in ch. 3:18ff., and stated the same idea in 4:11-12, especially in regard to forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name only.

V. 44 - The Samaritans, another group rejected by the Jews, received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8), which helped show that God had accepted them. God used Peter and John there to show his approval.

Apparently the descent of the Holy Spirit interrupted Peter's speech. The obvious reason, as Peter showed in chapter 11, was to make clear to all, Jews and Gentiles alike, that the principle stated in v. 34, 35 was true. We need to realize the ages-old bigotry of each race, and to what lengths God went to break down the wall of partition. Peter, after the command to not call unclean what God had cleansed, saw the application of that principle in respect to the Gentile household of Cornelius, and now saw God verify the fact.

V. 46 - God had taken special pains to aid the apostles at Pentecost to preach the truth, and the Holy Spirit was the means whereby that was done. Now for the sake of multitudes who did not know the truth about the plan of redemption (i.e., that it was for the whole world), God again used the Holy Spirit to announce in all its splendor: salvation is for Gentiles also.

The languages in which the people were speaking were obviously understood by Peter and his Jewish brethren, or they could not have known that God was being exalted and magnified (the Greek means to make large or make long - so to magnify, exalt, praise, etc.).

V. 47 - The question seems almost superfluous, but in light of the reaction in chapter 11, it was quite appropriate. The fact was clear to those present: Gentiles had received the gift of God, the Holy Spirit, just like the Jews. Hence, all were equal in the way of salvation.

V. 48 - The clear fact: the Gentiles had faith in Jesus, plus the evident acceptance of God - so, the next imperative was immersion, even as was so with Saul of Tarsus (though Christ had appeared to him personally!). We anticipate the discussion in 11:15 by remarking that the apostles at Pentecost and Cornelius' household were the only two groups ever said to be immersed in the Holy Spirit, in each case for a specific purpose, and in each case not for the remission of sins. Forgiveness of sins is obtained by faith in Christ (v. 43), not any other way. It is the message of Christ preached, believed and obeyed that procures salvation.

QUESTIONS

114. Is Cornelius an example of a good man who was lost and needed to be saved?
115. Do the statements of Romans 10:17; I Cor. 1:18; 15:1-4 corroborate what the angel told Cornelius in ch. 11:14?
116. What was the common point of reference in the call and commission of Paul and the experience of Peter with Cornelius?
117. How could Peter have been a Christian but yet thought that Jewish dietary laws were still binding?
118. Is Cornelius' character somewhat like that of other centurions mentioned in the N.T.? (cf. Matt. 8; Luke 23; Acts 27.)
119. In what way(s) is God a respecter of persons? In what way(s) is he not a respecter of persons?
120. Who is able to receive forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name according to Peter?
121. To whom did God choose Jesus to appear as a resurrected Savior, according to Peter?
122. Is Jesus both a Savior and a judge, according to Peter?

123. Where in the N.T. are we told that having an experience indicates a person has salvation? Do all people have to hear, believe, and obey, or are some exempt from such?

ABA REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

1. Provide the history and location of Lydda.
2. Describe what took place in Lydda (Acts 9:32-35).
3. Provide the history and location of Joppa.
4. Discuss the names and meanings of “Tabitha” and “Dorcas”.
5. Identify Dorcas--who she was, what she did, and what happened to her.
6. Describe the moral and religious life of Cornelius before his conversion.
7. Discuss the history and location of Caesarea.
8. Explain the meaning of the Greek term “memorial”.
9. Describe Peter’s vision and what it meant.

10. Complete the textbook author's statement: "The point Peter had to learn was that it _____ for a Jew to _____ with a Gentile."

11. In contrast to the attitudes of many people, Peter said that "God _____" (Acts 10:34)".

12. What are two requirements for a person to be acceptable to God (Acts 10:35)?

13. Name two special ways in which God anointed Jesus.

14. In summarizing Jesus' ministry, Peter said that Jesus went about " _____" Acts 10:38.

15. How does Acts 10:39 further teach that only the Apostles were specially blessed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2)?

16. Contrast what the Jews did to Jesus and what God did for Him (Acts 10:39-40).

17. Complete the textbook author's statement: "Another important facet of Jesus: He was _____ to be the _____. Hence, one needs to make _____ before the _____ is _____."

18. What did God wish to communicate to people by pouring out the Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius?

19. Describe the "speaking in tongues" by Cornelius and his household. Were the "tongues" known languages? Explain.

20. Who are the only two groups in the New Testament said to be immersed or baptized in the Holy Spirit?

21. What did Peter command those who had received the Holy Spirit to do?

22. Complete the textbook author's statement: "It is the message of Christ _____, _____, and _____ that procures salvation."