

Jesus Builds – the book of Acts

Lesson Thirteen | Acts 9:32-10:48

Background

The book of Acts was written by the physician, Luke, as a continuation of his Gospel. Jesus said he would build his church and Acts is the earliest history we have about that. It begins with the Ascension on Mount Olivet and then tracks the development of the early church with a particular focus on Peter in the early chapters and Paul in the later chapters, taking us to the early AD 60s.

Context

After the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6-7) and the persecution that followed, the church was moving beyond Jerusalem, but it was considered a sect of Judaism. While we see some proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism, e.g., Acts 6:5), we have not yet seen evangelism of Gentiles who are not proselytes. But it is clear from the Old Testament that God always intended to include Gentiles in His redemptive program. Within church history, that begins with Cornelius, a Roman centurion.

Bible Study Tip

Know the Old Testament covenants (they matter).

Cornelius

1. **God's Plan:** God always intended to include Gentiles in His redemptive plan.

- We see Old Testament examples like Rahab (Joshua 2).
- This was part of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3).
- Israel was to be a light to the nations. (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6)
- The prophets said the future kingdom will include Gentiles (e.g., Zechariah 2:11, 14:16)
- Jesus said Gentiles will be in the kingdom (Matt. 8:8-11)

2. **Peter's Preparation for Ministry to Gentiles:** Acts 9:32 picks back up with the ministry of Peter. The healing of Aenas (9:32-35) and bringing back to life of Dorcas / Tabitha (9:36-43) showed God was with him in a special way. But more than that, Peter was ministering in Lydda (modern Lod) in the plain of Sharon along the coast of Palestine, and then in the coastal town of Joppa about 12 miles from Lydda. These towns had many Gentiles. Also, Peter stayed with Simon the tanner (9:43), but tanners were ceremonially unclean because of constant contact with dead animals (Leviticus 11:40).

3. **Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8):** This Roman centurion (in charge of 100 soldiers in a regiment of 600 soldiers) lived in Caesarea. He is described in the most positive terms (10:2) but was not a circumcised proselyte (11:3) and more importantly not yet a Christian (11:14). But he saw a vision of an angel that told him to send for Peter (10:3-6).

4. **Peter's Vision (10:9-16):** While praying in Joppa, Peter saw a vision where God told him to eat unclean animals.

5. **Peter Meets Cornelius' Men (10:17-23):** Peter met the men Cornelius sent to him and the Holy Spirit assured Peter.

6. **Peter Preaches to Gentiles (10:24-46):** Peter finally understands that Gentiles (not just proselytes to Judaism) are to be recipients of the gospel and he preaches the good news of Jesus Christ to Cornelius and others with him.

- Peter preaches the death and resurrection of Jesus (10:39-41) just as he preached to Jews (e.g., Acts 2)
- The forgiveness of sins is received by faith (10:43)
- **Does God still work in similar ways to save sinners?**