

Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 8, Acts 9:32-11:30

Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they

cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

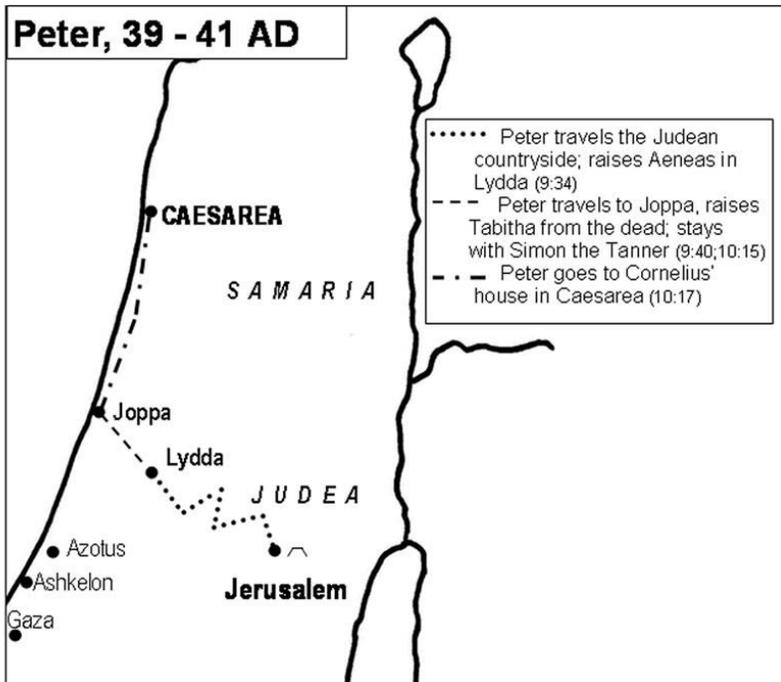
Introduction: God wants everyone

Section 1: Acts 9:32-43 Peter is Like Jesus

³² 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.

³⁶ 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. ³⁷ But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. ³⁸ 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. ⁴⁰ 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. ⁴² 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.



Luke tells us about this preaching circuit for two reasons: 1) because it happened, and 2) because he wants to connect Peter with Jesus. Jesus had also raised the lame and the dead (Mark 2:1-10, John 5:1-15, Lazarus John 11). Peter is like Jesus, healing the lame and raising the dead. This section gets us ready for what is to come. The church is about to have to do something very difficult.

Section 2: Acts 10:1-47 Here Come the Gentiles

10 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ²a devout *man* and one who

feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. ³About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

⁴And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?"

So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.⁵ Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. ⁶He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." ⁷And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. ⁸So when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. ¹⁰Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

¹⁴ But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

¹⁵ And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." ¹⁶ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

¹⁷ Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. ¹⁸ And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

¹⁹ While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. ²⁰ Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

²¹ Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

²² And they said, "Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." ²³ Then he invited them in and lodged *them*.

On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

²⁴ And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. ²⁸ Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ²⁹ Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

³⁰ So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.' ³² Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' ³³ So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.³⁶ The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—³⁷ that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. ⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. ⁴² And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been

poured out on the Gentiles also.⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?" ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

This is a long section to explain how Peter came to the place where he accepted Cornelius into the church. We need to understand that there were different groups in the ancient world. There were God's people, the Jews. There were Gentile converts to Judaism, like Cornelius here. And there were Pagans, people who did not worship God at all, but worshipped false gods.

Peter is just like his Jewish brothers. He sees God only fully accepting His people the Jews. Converts were still uncircumcised. They were second class citizens. Jews would wash their hands when they returned from the marketplace just in case they had touched anything touched by a Gentile. They would be unclean. Peter had never been inside a Gentile's home.

This is why Jesus gives Peter the picture of the unclean food, telling him to eat them. This would have repulsed Peter. It bothered him to the point where he put together words that make no sense together—no Lord.

Jesus is behind this whole encounter between Peter and Cornelius. He sends an angel to Cornelius and gives Peter a vision and speaks to him directly. The Holy Spirit coming on Cornelius and his

household seals the deal. If God has accepted them into His church, who are they to reject them?

Section 3: Acts 11 Will the Church Accept Who Jesus Accepts?

11 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ²And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, ³saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. ⁴But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying, ⁵I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: ⁶upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. ⁷And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. ⁸But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. ⁹But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. ¹⁰And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cæsarea unto me. ¹²And the Spirit bade me go with them,

nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: ¹³and he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; ¹⁴who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. ¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. ¹⁷Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

¹⁸When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

¹⁹Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. ²⁰And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

²² Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. ²³ Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. ²⁴ For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

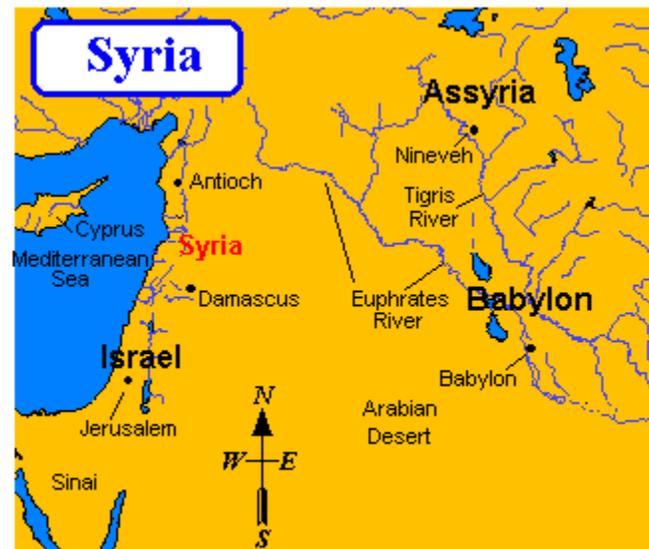
²⁵ Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

²⁷ And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. ²⁸ And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar. ²⁹ Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa: ³⁰ which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

The church finds this whole situation very hard to swallow. Their whole lives they have developed a deep seated disgust for the Gentiles, the uncircumcised. They were unclean. How could they possibly be welcomed into the church?

Peter recounts the whole story, showing the hand of God in it all. He ends the story with the Spirit falling on the Gentiles. Notice, the Spirit fell without the laying on of hands. God can work however He wills. The evidence of receiving the Spirit convinced Peter that God was accepting this household (oikos).

This whole experience led to the next step—the preaching of the Gospel to the Greeks in Antioch.



Barnabas, a leader in the church, goes to Antioch and endorses what God is doing there. He brings Saul from Tarsus and the two of them work together for a year forming the church. This church in Antioch¹ will later become the church that launches Paul's ministry throughout Asia Minor.

This section ends with Barnabas and Saul being sent to deliver relief for the church in Judea. Notice the order of the names. This tells us that Barnabas was the leader at this time.

It was in Antioch that believers were first called Christians. This word means, "Little Christs." This was most likely first of all a put down or a derogatory name, but later it was embraced by the church. What could be better than to be called a little Christ? Hopefully, this is something that all believers will aspire to.

What have we learned?

These chapters cover the believers becoming more inclusive, opening the doors of the church to those who were not born Jews, who were not circumcised.

God's church is His. Those who are called to lead it must always, follow His lead and do what he is doing. When God accepts someone, then the church must accept them as well.

There was a church once that experienced strife because some of the younger men who had come to Christ were becoming leaders and on hot days they would serve communion wearing flip flops. This bothered the elderly people and caused tension in the church.

The pastor got on Sunday and noticed the stained glass picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd in the front of the church. He pointed out that there were some in the building who would have a problem with Jesus' outfit and would not be comfortable with Him serving them communion because of how He was dressed.

Some churches throughout the ages have held to the maxim: Whatever is true for all people in all places in all times is essential. The rest is only culture and is flexible. Let's be honest about our prejudices and bring them before God. Let's ask God to give us the ability to accept everyone He accepts.

¹ *Nelson New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 80

What the Text Says

Section 1 Acts 9:32-43

These two accounts show us that Peter is walking in the steps of Jesus. Even as Jesus healed paralytics and raised the dead, so also does Peter. He is walking by the same Spirit.

Section 2 Acts 10:1-47

Here we see how God changes our minds. We walk in many misconceptions. We have deep-seated ideas and prejudices from our culture and our family. These become part of us. God wants to renew our minds, for us to have the mind of Christ. This means bringing us to a crisis point and leading us to repentance. This is what we see Peter doing. He enters Cornelius' house (something he would never have done as a Jew), after seeing that Cornelius and his household receive the Spirit of God, Peter baptizes them and accepts them into the church as full brothers and sisters.

Section 3 Acts 11

It is one thing for Peter to accept Gentiles after his special experiences, it is quite another to convince the rest of the church to do the same. No one other than Peter could have done this. He alone had the credibility. We see that in Antioch there is an evangelistic movement among the Gentiles. Barnabas, another church leader, and Saul go to support these new believers. Even after the church accepts Gentiles into the church, there were still many who held that when Gentiles accepted Christ they still had to become Jews through circumcision (the sign of the promise to Abraham). Paul fought these prejudices throughout his ministry.

Connecting to the Scripture

These chapters challenge us to leave our prejudices behind. The gospel belongs to God who is inviting all to come to Him through the death and resurrection of His Son on their behalf.

We were raised to think certain ways about ourselves, our culture, and the cultures of others. There is often the tendency to believe that our race is superior to others.

In Christ there is something that unites all people, something that is far above the things that are different between us. We have a common Father. All in Christ look up to the heavenly throne for their parentage. Imagine how you would feel if you discovered that someone you had prejudicial feelings about was actually your brother or sister. Your feelings would immediately change. This is exactly what happens in Christ. We love the same father.

Christ is our common brother and our common role model. We are all striving to be like Jesus. We also share a common Spirit. When we became Christ's we were filled with the same Holy Spirit.

We are cells in the same body of Christ. Jesus inhabits the body of Christ the same way we inhabit our bodies.

As you can see, we have far more in common with all Christians, regardless of their race or culture, that we could ever have different from them.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Questions to Ask During the Study

Section 1 Read Acts 9:32-43

1. What comparison can you see between Peter and Jesus?
2. What position do you think Peter had in the church? What was the extent of his influence? What were the limits?

Section 2 Read Acts 10:1-47

1. What was Cornelius like? What impact did his life have?
2. How did he receive this message?
3. Why is Peter told to eat things he had never eaten in his life? How does stirring up these emotions connect with the knock at Peter's door?
4. We all have prejudices. There are people we do not understand or relate with. Think about the cultural prejudices you were raised with. If you feel comfortable, share with the group.
5. Peter learns that whoever God accepts is accepted. What do we have in common with all people in Christ? What should our feelings be towards people of races and cultures different than ours who are in Christ?

Section 3 Read Acts 11

1. Have you ever had to convince people of something that is very hard for them to swallow? Share what happened.
2. How does Peter convince the other Apostles that they should accept the Gentile believers?
3. What happens in the church after these people are accepted ?