

## Peter's Itinerant Ministry (c. 38–40)

Acts 9:31–43

### Peace and Growth for the Early Church

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

### Aeneas Healed at Lydda

32 Now as Peter was traveling through all *those regions*, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.

34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.

35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

### Dorcas Raised at Joppa

36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated *in Greek* is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.

37 And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.

38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us."

39 So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

40 But Peter sent 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 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

43 And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon.

## Peter and Cornelius—Salvation Apart from Circumcision Confirmed (c. 38–40)

Acts 10

### Cornelius' Vision

1 Now *there was* a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,

2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually.

3 About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had *just* come in and said to him, "Cornelius!"

4 And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

5 "Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter;

6 he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea."

### Cornelius Sends Men to Joppa for Peter

7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants,

8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

### Peter's Vision of Unclean Animals

9 On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

10 But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance;

11 and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,

12 and there were in it all *kinds of* four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.

13 A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"

14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."

15 Again a voice *came* to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy."

16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

### The Arrival of Cornelius' Servants

17 Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate;

18 and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

19 While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you.  
 20 But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself.”  
 21 Peter went down to the men and said, “Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?”  
 22 They said, “Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was *divinely* directed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear a message from you.”  
 23a So he invited them in and gave them lodging.

#### **Peter at Cornelius’ House in Caesarea**

23b And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.  
 24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.  
 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*.  
 26 But Peter raised him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am *just* a man.”  
 27 As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled.  
 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.  
 29 That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me.”  
 30 Cornelius said, “Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments,  
 31 and he said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.  
 32 ‘Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon *the* tanner by the sea.’  
 33 So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

#### **Peter Presents the Gospel**

34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality,  
 35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.  
 36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—  
 37 you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.  
 38 *You know of* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and *how* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.  
 39 We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.  
 40 God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,  
 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.  
 42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.  
 43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”

#### **The Holy Spirit Confirms Salvation to the Gentiles Apart from Circumcision**

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.  
 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.  
 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,  
 47 “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?”  
 48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

### **Early Jewish Resistance to Salvation without Circumcision (c. 38–40)**

Acts 11:1–18

#### **Peter Attacked by the Circumcision Party**

1 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.  
 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,  
 3 saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

**Peter's Defense of Gentile Conversion Apart from Circumcision**

4 But Peter began *speaking* and *proceeded* to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying,

5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me,

6 and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air.

7 I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'

8 But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

9 But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.'

10 This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.

11 And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were *staying*, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

12 The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house.

13 And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here;

14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as *He did* upon us at the beginning.

16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' [cf. [Acts 1:5](#); [Mark 1:8](#)]

17 Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

**Most Jews are Convinced by Peter's Explanation (but not all, cf. Acts 15:1–5)**

18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life."

**Herod Agrippa I Executes James (c. 43)**

Acts 12:1–2

1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.

2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.

**Peter Imprisoned by Herod Agrippa I (April of 43 or 44)**

Acts 12:3–19

**Peter Arrested and Imprisoned**

3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.

5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

**Peter Rescued by an Angel**

6 On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.

7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.

8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."

9 And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

10 When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

**Peter Goes to Mary's House, Then Leaves for a Safe Hiding Place**

12 And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.

14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate.  
 15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel."  
 16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were amazed.  
 17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

#### **Herod Executes the Guards**

18 Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers *as to* what could have become of Peter.  
 19 When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away *to execution*. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

### **The Death of Herod Agrippa I (44)**

Acts 12:20–23

20 Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country.  
 21 On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and *began* delivering an address to them.  
 22 The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"  
 23 And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

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#### **Chronological Notes**

- 1) Concerning the death of Herod Agrippa I, I side with the majority (represented by Kostenberger) against Steinmann<sup>1</sup> and Schwartz,<sup>2</sup> and affirm that Herod's death took place in the first half of 44.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 303–304. Steinmann follows Schwartz's view of Herod's death.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I: the Last King of Judea*, (Tubingen: Mohr, 1990): 109–111, 203–207. For an excellent critique of Schwartz's view see Nina L. Collins, "Review: *Agrippa I* by Daniel R. Schwartz," *Novum Testamentum* 34.1 (Jan 1992): 90–101.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (B&H Academic, 2009): 62.