

Peter's Itinerant Ministry (c. 38–40)

Acts 9:31–43

Peace and Growth for the Early Church

31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria experienced peace and thus was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, the church increased in numbers.

Aeneas Healed at Lydda

32 Now as Peter was traveling around from place to place, he also came down to the saints who lived in Lydda.
 33 He found there a man named Aeneas who had been confined to a mattress for eight years because he was paralyzed.
 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Get up and make your own bed!" And immediately he got up.
 35 All those who lived in 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 in translation means Dorcas). She was continually doing good deeds and acts of charity.
 37 At that time she became sick and died. When they had washed her body, they placed it in an upstairs room.
 38 Because Lydda was near Joppa, when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Come to us without delay."
 39 So Peter got up and went with them, and when he arrived they brought him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him, crying and showing him the tunics and other clothing Dorcas used to make while she was with them.
 40 But Peter sent them all outside, knelt down, and prayed. Turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.
 41 He gave her his hand and helped her get up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her alive.
 42 This became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.
 43 So Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a man named Simon, a tanner.

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

Acts 10

Cornelius' Vision

1 Now there was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort.
 2 He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was all his household; he did many acts of charity for the people and prayed to God regularly.
 3 About three o'clock one afternoon he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God who came in and said to him, "Cornelius."
 4 Staring at him and becoming greatly afraid, Cornelius replied, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said to him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have gone up as a memorial before God."
 5 Now send men to Joppa and summon a man named Simon, who is called Peter.
 6 This man is staying as a guest with a man named Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."

Cornelius Sends Men to Joppa for Peter

7 When the angel who had spoken to him departed, Cornelius called two of his personal servants and a devout soldier from among those who served him,
 8 and when he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Peter's Vision of Unclean Animals

9 About noon the next day, while they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.
 10 He became hungry and wanted to eat, but while they were preparing the meal, a trance came over him.
 11 He saw heaven opened and an object something like a large sheet descending, being let down to earth by its four corners.
 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and wild birds.
 13 Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; slaughter and eat!"
 14 But Peter said, "Certainly not, Lord, for I have never eaten anything defiled and ritually unclean!"
 15 The voice spoke to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not consider ritually unclean!"
 16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into heaven.

The Arrival of Cornelius' Servants

17 Now while Peter was puzzling over what the vision he had seen could signify, the men sent by Cornelius had learned where Simon's house was and approached the gate.
 18 They called out to ask if Simon, known as Peter, was staying there as a guest.

10:19 While Peter was still thinking seriously about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Look! Three men are looking for you.
 20 But get up, go down, and accompany them without hesitation, because I have sent them.”
 21 So Peter went down to the men and said, “Here I am, the person you’re looking for. Why have you come?”
 22 They said, “Cornelius the centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man, well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to summon you to his house and to hear a message from you.”
 23a So Peter invited them in and entertained them as guests.

Peter at Cornelius’ House in Caesarea

23b On the next day he got up and set out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.
 24 The following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting anxiously for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.
 25 So when Peter came in, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshiped him.
 26 But Peter helped him up, saying, “Stand up. I too am a mere mortal.”
 27 Peter continued talking with him as he went in, and he found many people gathered together.
 28 He said to them, “You know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile, yet God has shown me that I should call no person defiled or ritually unclean.
 29 Therefore when you sent for me, I came without any objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?”
 30 Cornelius replied, “Four days ago at this very hour, at three o’clock in the afternoon, I was praying in my house, and suddenly a man in shining clothing stood before me
 31 and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your acts of charity have been remembered before God.
 32 Therefore send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter. This man is staying as a guest in the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea.’
 33 Therefore I sent for you at once, and you were kind enough to come. So now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to say to us.”

Peter Presents the Gospel

34 Then Peter started speaking: “I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism in dealing with people,
 35 but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is welcomed before him.
 36 You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—
 37 you know what happened throughout Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John announced:
 38 with respect to Jesus from Nazareth, that God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him.
 39 We are witnesses of all the things he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree,
 40 but God raised him up on the third day and caused him to be seen,
 41 not by all the people, but by us, the witnesses God had already chosen, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.
 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to warn them that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.
 43 About him all the prophets testify, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

The Holy Spirit Confirms Salvation to the Gentiles Apart from Circumcision

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the message.
 45 The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were greatly astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles,
 46 for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,
 47 “No one can withhold the water for these people to be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?”
 48 So he gave orders to have them baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for several 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 brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles too had accepted the word of God.
 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers took issue with him,
 3 saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and shared a meal with them.”

Peter’s Defense of Gentile Conversion Apart from Circumcision

4 But Peter began and explained it to them point by point, saying,

5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, an object something like a large sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came to me.
 6 As I stared I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds.
 7 I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; slaughter and eat!’
 8 But I said, ‘Certainly not, Lord, for nothing defiled or ritually unclean has ever entered my mouth!’
 9 But the voice replied a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not consider ritually unclean!’
 10 This happened three times, and then everything was pulled up to heaven again.
 11 At that very moment, three men sent to me from Caesarea approached the house where we were staying.
 12 The Spirit told me to accompany them without hesitation. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house.
 13 He informed us how he had seen an angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter,
 14 who will speak a message to you by which you and your entire household will be saved.’
 15 Then as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as he did on us at the beginning.
 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, as 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 them the same gift as he also gave us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to hinder God?”

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

18 When they heard this, they ceased their objections and praised God, saying, “So then, God has granted the repentance that leads to life even to the Gentiles.”

Herod Agrippa I Executes James (c. 43)

Acts 12:1–2

1 About that time King Herod laid hands on some from the church to harm them.
 2 He had James, the brother of John, executed 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 this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter too. (This took place during the feast of Unleavened Bread.)
 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, handing him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him. Herod planned to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.
 5 So Peter was kept in prison, but those in the church were earnestly praying to God for him.

Peter Rescued by an Angel

6 On that very night before Herod was going to bring him out for trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison.
 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the prison cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up, saying, “Get up quickly!” And the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.
 8 The angel said to him, “Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.” Peter did so. Then the angel said to him, “Put on your cloak and follow me.”
 9 Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening through the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.
 10 After they had passed the first and second guards, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went outside and walked down one narrow street, when at once the angel left him.
 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from everything the Jewish people were expecting to happen.”

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

12 When Peter realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many people had gathered together and were praying.
 13 When he knocked at the door of the outer gate, a slave girl named Rhoda answered.
 14 When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she did not open the gate, but ran back in and told them that Peter was standing at the gate.
 15 But they said to her, “You’ve lost your mind!” But she kept insisting that it was Peter, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!”

16 Now Peter continued knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were greatly astonished.
 17 He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet and then related how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. He said, “Tell James and the brothers these things,” and then he left and went to another place.

Herod Executes the Guards

18 At daybreak there was great consternation among the soldiers over what had become of Peter.
 19 When Herod had searched for him and did not find him, he questioned the guards and commanded that they be led away to execution. Then Herod went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

The Death of Herod Agrippa I (44)

Acts 12:20–23

20 Now Herod was having an angry quarrel with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they joined together and presented themselves before him. And after convincing Blastus, the king’s personal assistant, to help them, they asked for peace, because their country’s food supply was provided by the king’s country.
 21 On a day determined in advance, Herod put on his royal robes, sat down on the judgment seat, and made a speech to them.
 22 But the crowd began to shout, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!”
 23 Immediately an angel of the Lord struck Herod down because he did not give the glory to God, 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 Steinmann¹ and Schwartz,² and affirm that Herod’s death took place in the first half of 44.³

¹ Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 303–304. Steinmann follows Schwartz’s view of Herod’s death.

² 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.

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