

KINGDOM BREAKTHROUGH

Acts 9:32 – 10:48 (ESV)

We left Peter in 8:25 when he returned to Jerusalem with John from their visit to Samaria. Now we find him, taking advantage probably of the collapse of the recent persecution, engaged in an itinerant ministry of visitation among the dispersed Christian communities of Judea. There was one such community in Lydda (the Greek name of Lod). The nucleus of this community was most likely formed of fugitives from the persecution in Jerusalem.

Little did Peter know that this ministry trip would result in a radical Kingdom breakthrough.

Let's pick up the **story in Acts 9:32...**

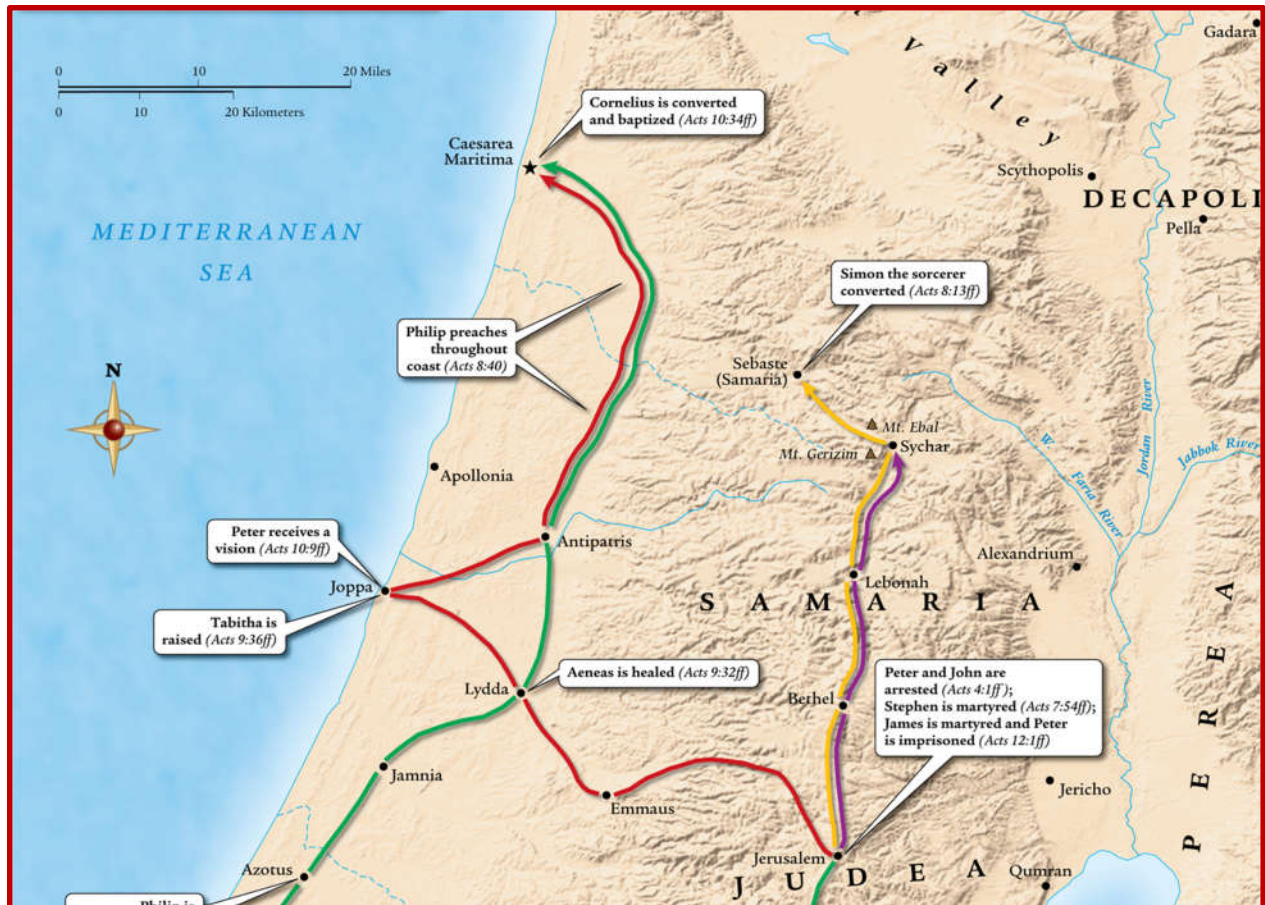
Acts 9:32-35 Jesus Heals Aeneas Through Peter

32 *Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.*

33 *There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who 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.*



This healing reminds us of the lame man healed by Peter on the Temple steps shortly after the Ascension of Jesus (Acts 3:1 - 4:4).

From Lydda, Peter continued to the coast to Joppa. Joppa is also known as Jaffa and is now part of the **Tel Aviv metropolx**.

Acts 9:36-43 Jesus Revives Tabitha Through Peter

36 Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.

37 In those days she became ill 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, urging him, "Please come to us without delay."

39 So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all outside, 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. 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.

The tunics and garments made for the widows by Dorcas makes me think about our quilting ministry and the many quilts given to the sick and convalescing in our church family.

Here is a note from one who recently received a quilt:

I recently received one of your beautiful prayer quilts. It was delivered by Charmaine and Bob Bush the day before my first chemo treatment. I was so touched by this gift. I wrapped myself in the quilt the night before my treatment. I was comforted just knowing of all the prayers offered just for my healing. I slept 7 hours that night. The most in 2 months. I will be taking (the quilt) to each treatment moving forward. Thank you for your kindness. I feel extremely blessed.

Deborah Detloff (Bob Bush's sister)

Thank you, Dottie Croman, for leading this ministry and thank you sisters for your labor of love over these last many years.

While Peter stayed in Joppa, the Lord was at work up the coast in the city of **Caesarea**.

Acts 10:1-8 God Arranged for Cornelius to Reach Out to Peter

1 *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 generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.*

3 *About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say 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 one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the **sea.**"*

7 *When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him,*

8 *and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.*

Cornelius was a Gentile, a non-Jew. He was a Roman soldier; a centurion commanding 100 Roman soldiers out of a cohort of 1000 soldiers originally recruited from Italy, thus, the *Italian Cohort*. He was a God-fearer who worshipped the true God of Israel and treated the Jews with respect and compassion. At 3PM, one of the set times of

prayer for the Jews, an angel of God came to Cornelius to set up a meet between Cornelius and Peter.

Obedying the angel's instructions, Cornelius sent a team of three men south to Joppa to find and invite Simon (Peter) to come to Caesarea.

Meanwhile, south, in the city of Joppa, God was preparing Peter **for this meeting**.

Acts 10:9-23 God Prepares Peter to Meet Cornelius

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

10 *And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell **into a trance***

11 *and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its 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, "By no means, 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 made clean, do 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 that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at 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 invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.*

The Law of Moses reveals the holiness of God. The Law taught the Jews to be holy as God is holy. The core idea of the Hebrew word for holy, is to be cut off. To be separated from. To be cut off and separated from everything that is impure, evil, profane.

Some laws of the Law of Moses were given, in part, to simply teach and train the Jews to be holy, to be separate and distinct in their practices from the people groups around them. Dietary laws, keeping a kosher kitchen, falls into this category. To violate these laws was to be defiled and made ceremonially unclean and unable to participate in worship until made clean. Eventually this prohibition against eating non-kosher food extended to a prohibition against socializing with people who ate non-kosher food. Thus, a devout Jew, concerned for his personal holiness, would never enter a Gentile home because, among other things, they did not keep a kosher kitchen.

Thus, the vision Peter received was much more about changing Peter's perspective on Gentiles than on a change in dietary laws. Peter rightly

interpreted the vision, welcomed the team from Cornelius and proceeded with them to Cornelius' home in Caesarea, a gentile home, – something he never would have done before receiving the vision.

Instead of resisting the Holy Spirit and this extreme change in God's program, Peter readily embraced it and, as a result, was used by God to accomplish one of the greatest breakthroughs in kingdom history.

After a two-day journey north, Peter, Peter's companions and Cornelius' men reached the city of Caesarea and **entered Cornelius' home.**

Acts 10:23-48 Gentiles Believe and Receive the Holy Spirit

23 *The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.*

24 *And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close **friends.***

25 *When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped 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 anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person 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 praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing

31 *and said, '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 sea.'

33 *So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."*

34 *So Peter* opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,

35 *but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*

36 *As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),*

37 *you yourselves* know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:

38 *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He 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 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 to appear,*

41 *not to all the people but to us who had been 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 appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.*

43 *To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

44 *While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.*

45 *And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.*

46 *For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared,*

47 *"Can anyone withhold water for 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.*

On this day a huge religious and cultural barrier was breached.

The Kingdom of God in Christ came to Gentiles. By grace through faith, they received forgiveness of their sins and were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. What was the proof they had received the Holy Spirit? They spoke in tongues as had the first Jewish believers on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13).

Peter was able to confirm on the spot that these Gentiles were truly born-again so he directed they be water baptized.

It really is very difficult for us to grasp the significance of this episode. For the first time in 1500 years, since the giving of the Law, *Gentiles, as Gentiles were saved by faith without having to come under the Law of Moses.*

So radical was this change, it caused major problems among Jewish believers in the early church. The first church council was convened to resolve the question regarding how Gentiles are saved. Peter's testimony concerning Cornelius turned the tide and settled the issue (Acts 15:1-29).

This episode illustrates the primary purpose of the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues validated that the recipients were genuinely born-again followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Tongues validated the earliest Jewish believers (Acts 2:1-13). Tongues validated the earliest Samaritan believers (Acts 8:14-17). And now, the gift of tongues validated the earliest Gentile believers!

This episode also establishes the fact that water baptism is not necessary in order to acquire justification salvation. Cornelius put his faith in Jesus, was forgiven his sins and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The forgiveness of his sins and the indwelling by the Holy Spirit were in no way dependent upon Cornelius being water baptized. In fact, water baptism was a physical illustration and declaration that forgiveness and indwelling of the Spirit were past **completed actions**.

Finally, God is still saving Jews and Gentiles alike through His Son, Jesus of Nazareth. God loves you and wants a personal relationship with you. The question is, do you want a relationship with God? Most people do not. But if you do, that's good, but there is a problem. You are separated from God; we all were separated from God at one time. You are separated from God because of your sin. Your sin is all the ways you have broken God's law and all the ways you have disrespected and dishonored God, the Eternal Creator and Ruler of the Universe. The good news is God not only wants a relationship with you; He's made a way for your sins to be forgiven that satisfies His justice and allows Him to pardon you. Jesus lived a sinless life. He died in your

place on the cross. He took the judgment and punishment you deserved and suffered in your place. Your sin has been punished and paid in full. Jesus died and came back to life three days later. By believing in Jesus, putting your confidence in Jesus to make you right with God, all your sin, past, present and future, will be forgiven and the Holy Spirit will come to live in your life. Your new life with God will begin. The Spirit will begin to change you from the inside out to become like Jesus.

Do you want God? Trust in Jesus today!

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