

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

Week 4 | Unleashed to ALL People | Acts 9:32-12:24

We rejoin Peter as he is traveling around visiting believers in the country outside of Jerusalem. Joppa is a town on the Mediterranean coast, and Lydda is about 10 miles inland from there. As he goes, the Holy Spirit continues to validate Peter's testimony about Jesus with supernatural signs and wonders. These accounts of Peter healing a paralyzed man, and bringing a dead woman to life parallel similar instances from Luke's account of the ministry of Jesus. (See Luke 5:17-26, and Luke 8:51-56) These miracles demonstrate that Peter brings the power that Jesus demonstrated and therefore is authenticated as Jesus' true apostle—one who is sent from God.

1. AENEAS AND TABITHA: Read Acts 9:32-43
 - a) Who healed Aeneas, according to Peter? (v. 34)
 - b) What was the result of Aeneas' healing? (v. 35)
 - c) Why did Peter go from Lydda to Joppa? (v. 38)
 - d) What do we know about Tabitha? Why was she important to the disciples in Joppa?
 - e) What was the result of Tabitha's resurrection? (v. 42)
 - f) Personal Reflection: It seems as if the *purpose* of healings and other miracles in Acts was to turn people to faith in Jesus. Is there an example in your life where God did something that changed everything for you? Do other people hear about what He's done for you and "turn to the Lord"?
2. CORNELIUS: Read Acts 10:1-11:18 Luke now recounts one more experience that parallels the ministry of Jesus—a remarkable encounter with a Roman Centurion. (See Luke 7:1-10)
 - a) What do we know about Cornelius?
 - b) Describe Cornelius' vision and what he does in response to it.

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c) Describe Peter's vision. Why do you think the vision was repeated 3 times?

d) What did Peter say he "realized" when Cornelius explained why he sent for him? (10:34)

How is this different from what God had already shown him? (10:28)

e) What is the summation of Peter's message? (10:43) Describe the impact on his audience. What is Peter's response?

f) Peter was the recognized leader of the Church at this time. Yet, when he returned to Jerusalem, he was criticized for his contact with "uncircumcised men." How did he respond to this criticism? (11:4) Why was Peter's defense persuasive?

g) Personal Reflection: What external trappings that you associate with "being a Christian" make it hard for you to accept those who are different from you? (That is to say, are there people or "types" of people you can't imagine becoming Christians?) How does God's truth challenge you to change the way you think and behave?

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3. ANTIOCH: Read Acts 11:19-30 Antioch was a major city more than 300 miles north of Jerusalem situated on the Mediterranean Sea. It was the junction of multiple important trade routes and was considered the eastern capital of the Roman Empire. Check out a map of the area during the 1st Century to get a picture of how dramatically the gospel was spreading in a short period of time. (You can find one in the back of your study bible, or pull one up on line.)
- a. How did the gospel come to Antioch? (v. 19-20. See also Acts 8:1)
 - b. How did Barnabas, Paul, and others minister to the new Church? (v. 23, 26, 27)
 - c. What did the believers at Antioch do in response to a prophesied famine? (v. 29)
 - d. Do you find anything surprising about their response?
 - e. How does the church in Antioch serve as an example for you in your giving?
 - f. Personal Reflection: Have you seen (in your life or in others' lives) unexpected upheaval serving to accomplish God's good purposes?
4. HEROD: Read Acts 12:1-12 As the gospel was beginning to spread into Gentile territory, powerful opposition arose from King Herod Agrippa, who had been given authority over Judea by Rome. Agrippa was the grandson of Herod the Great who was in power at the time of Jesus' birth. He was the nephew of Herod Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist and tried Jesus. Herod Agrippa set himself in opposition to God by choosing to persecute God's church."
- a. How did Herod Agrippa begin persecuting the church? (v. 1-2)

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- b. After Herod saw that his evil acts brought approval from the Jews, how did he intensify his attack on the church? (12:3-4)
- c. How did the church respond to the arrest of this key leader in God's plan to spread the gospel?
- d. How was Peter guarded to ensure he would not escape?
- e. Did God rescue Peter immediately?
- f. During the process of the rescue, Peter was confused about what was happening. What did he do once he realized what God had done? (12:11)
- g. What was the response of the praying church? (12:13-17)
- h. How did Herod react to the deliverance of Peter? (12:18-19)
- i. Personal Reflection: What do you learn from this account about God's power? About God's mercy? About our responsibility for persistent prayer?
- j. Personal Reflection: Herod unjustly arrested both James and Peter. James was killed; Peter was dramatically delivered from prison. What do we conclude about God's acts in each of these men's lives? Does this challenge your thinking about how God accomplishes His purposes? (Consider Philippians 1:21-24.)
- k. Herod Agrippa commanded all of the power of the Roman Empire, and armed with that power, he set himself in opposition to the God of the universe. When Herod Agrippa assumed the ultimate conceit of receiving worship as a god, how did God display His greater power? (12:19-23)
- l. Describe the ongoing progress of the gospel as reported in 12:24.

Personal Reflection: How do the events of Acts 12 help you remain calm and confident in the face of chaotic world events and even world leaders who oppose the work of God?

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