

A Study of the Acts of the Apostles  
Week Thirteen  
Acts 10:17-48

**Day One**

17 While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. 18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." 21 Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

v. 17 – Peter was trying to figure out what just happened, but at the same time the delegation from Cornelius arrived. God doesn't leave us alone. He gives us ideas, visions and words, but doesn't expect us to figure them out on our own. He also gives the interpretation. The action application, however, is up to us. Don't wait around for God to do what only you can do. It will never happen.

v. 18-21 – Here the Spirit gave Peter the interpretation of what was happening. But Peter still could have refused to go along with these unclean Gentiles. We non-Jews can never understand what a major issue this issue was, along with the tradition of the dietary laws. Keeping a kosher house and lifestyle is still a priority for many Jews today, some 2,000 years later. Yet God was delivering Peter and His followers from such legalism. Jesus has set us free from such practices, which were simply shadows of the things to come in Christ. But those without Christ still seek to find spirituality in religious practices that have the appearance of spiritual worth:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence (Colossians 2:16-23).

As explained in this passage, the issue isn't religious practices or traditions, but rather it's all about the connection to the Head, who is Jesus. **How's your connection with the**

**Head? Or has there been a subtle replacement of that connection with rules and regulations?**

**Day Two**

22 The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." 23 Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. 24 The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. 26 But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

v. 22 – Peter asked the men why they had come and here they explained the reason. Peter then heard that an angel had identified him by name as the man they should seek out to come preach to Cornelius. The angel had not only identified Peter, but also let them know where he was staying at the time. When God wants to use you, there's no place too obscure for Him to locate you. If you aren't being fully utilized, it's not because you are with the wrong people or that your church doesn't give you a chance to do this or that. It's because God hasn't chosen to use you in that capacity up to this point. But when God is ready to use you, watch out! Heaven and earth can't prevent it! So stop focusing on the circumstances and focus on God. He is your source, your promoter, your employment counselor, your manager and your agent.

v. 23 – Peter invited the men into Simon the tanner's home. That's pretty generous of him, since it wasn't his house! When you practice hospitality, you must release control of your home, schedule, customs and preferences to another. Yet the Bible is clear that providing hospitality is a godly trait. **When is the last time you had someone in your home to eat? Sleep overnight?** "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9-10). When you provide hospitality, it is a form of service that can be very inconvenient for you, but very refreshing and life-changing for someone else. **So how can you "practice" hospitality this week?**

So Peter set out the next day to accompany these strangers whom God had sent to summon him. Peter had faith in God, not faith in the messengers and that's why he went. Too often we have put our faith in the messengers and they have disappointed us. Be careful where you put your trust. I'm working on keeping my faith and expectations in God, something I haven't always done.

v. 24 – It took the entourage more than a day to arrive in Caesarea, but Cornelius was so confident that Peter would come that he had assembled his whole household, which would have included not just family members but also those who worked for the family and his closest business "employees." We see that everyone had faith in this situation. God had faith when He revealed His purpose to Cornelius and Peter; Cornelius had faith when he sent his messenger and assembled his household; Peter had faith when he went

with the messengers who were sent to summon him. **Are you seeing a pattern here?** It is a principle that I have touched on in almost every study I have written:

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? (James 2:17-20).

vs. 25&26 – Cornelius sought to honor Peter in a way that was befitting his Roman background. Peter, however, was very sensitive to this form of “worship,” and quickly worked to defuse such honor. I wish that all of God’s servants had this attitude. Quite frankly I’m troubled by the show of honor that some pastors and leaders are given by God’s people. I think that the man or woman who receives it can easily get accustomed to receiving it and then start believing that they deserve it. I’ve watched churches acknowledge that Jesus is the head of the church with one sentence and then spend 10 minutes honoring the pastor. I think that’s the reverse of how it should be. Jesus should get the 10 minutes and the leader should get one sentence. Don’t be guilty of giving or receiving the honor that is due only to God. Work to defer that honor without insulting the giver.

### Day Three

27 Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. 28 He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

v. 27 – Cornelius had assembled a meeting in anticipation of God’s word to him being fulfilled. Wow! That’s faith in action! What can you do today in anticipation of God fulfilling His promises to you? Can you go shop for a car? Make room for a new piece of furniture? Apply for your passport? Open a bank account? Remember: Faith without action is useless, so do something today that is motivated by faith.

v. 28 – Peter was thinking out loud as he said these words. He may have been asking himself, “How did I get here? What am I doing here? Did I really hear from the Lord?” And he let the Gentiles know that it wasn’t his custom to attend Gentile gatherings. It was all right for Gentiles to come to Jews at the synagogues, but the Jews would and could not go to them. The same is true today. The church will usually welcome those who come to it—if they don’t have too many tattoos or blue hair. But the church isn’t very good about going to where the people are. **Is this true for you? Do you spend time with many people who aren’t like you? Any unsaved people? Do you have any people prejudices that keep you from being open to go to anyone, anywhere at anytime?**

Peter did acknowledge the meaning of his vision: That he should not refer to anyone was unclean. That was a major breakthrough in his thinking. Yet settling it in his mind and doing it were two different things. He still carried this issue into his later ministry as Paul reported:

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray (Galatians 2:11-13).

**Aren't you glad that God uses imperfect people?** Don't let your imperfections limit God's ability to use you. Press on and don't be surprised by anything that God shows you about *you*.

v. 29 – Peter was still trying to determine why they had sent for him. It doesn't seem like he knew that he could preach and lead them into salvation at this point. He had just determined that he they weren't unclean people, but he hadn't quite concluded that they were worthy candidates for salvation. *Lord, show me my bad thinking. Show me the ideas and mind habits that are not in line with what you think. Reveal to me where this thinking is holding me back as I serve You. Don't let me get so rigid in my thinking that I am not useful to You to reach anyone, anywhere.*

#### Day Four

30 Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me 31 and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. 32 Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' 33 So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

vs. 30&31 – Cornelius then explained why he had summoned Peter. It seems that the explanation that men who came to summon Peter wasn't enough for him. He wanted to hear directly from Cornelius himself. I heard one man speculate that Peter was stalling for time, not sure exactly what to do and not exactly sure if he wanted to do it. Cornelius wasn't worried about his reputation or what people would think that he had seen an angel. He was proceeding at full speed because God had spoken to him. He wasn't asking for confirmation, nor did he ponder this vision for any amount of time. He acted.

Cornelius is a good model to follow here. I know of many people who have received prophetic words or impressions from the Lord, and these people hold them, sort of like you would hold meat in a deep freeze. They are so afraid of missing the Lord that they want to hold their word until a more convenient time or until they can receive

“confirmation.” As I get older, I’m more and more aggressive where the Lord and His purposes are concerned. **Won’t you join me in this practice of aggressively carrying out anything we think may even remotely be from the Lord?**

v. 32 – Again we see that the Lord spoke directly to Cornelius about summoning Peter, but He spoke indirectly to Peter about going. This tells me that Cornelius, though a Gentile and one who had not walked with Jesus, was more prepared for God’s word than Peter was. That is what thinking in old ways can do to you: It can prevent you from understanding what God is saying because your mind is set. Cornelius was open because he didn’t think there was anything that God wouldn’t do. Peter didn’t think God would reach out to Gentiles, so his mind was closed. **Is your mind closed to anything that God may do?** If it is, then God may not be able to speak to you or use you where your mind is closed. Ask Him to show you any such attitude or “stronghold” today.

v. 33 – So there Peter had it in a nutshell. The Lord had told Cornelius to summon Peter; Cornelius had done so; now they were all ready to hear what Peter had to say. Peter was cornered; he had no option but to deliver to them what he knew about Jesus. Cornelius knew that what he would hear from Peter was really from the Lord. Let us never forget that we should honor the messenger but honor the One who sent the messenger most of all. I want to honor the men and women of God that God uses, but honor the God who uses them most of all. I know that how I treat God’s messengers is an indication of how I will treat the Lord. But if I am going to honor His servants, I think I must do something as well to honor Him.

I know that some have been guilty of treating God’s servants badly or casually. But that doesn’t mean we should go overboard in honoring God’s workers. As a fellow worker, I’ve seen many begin to believe that they deserve special honor. In my opinion, we don’t. When I go many places, someone always wants to carry my briefcase. I usually don’t allow them to do so. Why? Because I am capable of carrying it myself. I would rather that person listen and do what God is saying to do through me (if anything) than feel like he has done something for God by carrying my bag. **Do you think I am overreacting here?**

**Are you honoring God’s servants more than you are Him? What can you do today to honor Him? Give to the poor? Go out of your way to help someone in need? Be gracious to someone undeserving?**

### Day Five

34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. 36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

vs. 34&35 – This was an admission on Peter’s part that he did believe that God showed favoritism—toward Jews. I think that attitude is still prevalent among many, including believers. It’s hard to release romantic or nostalgic notions where Israel is concerned. Recently a man in my church interrupted the pastor while he was preaching because the man thought the pastor had made some disparaging remarks against Israel! The pastor had not, but my point is that this man felt free to interrupt the preacher to defend Israel’s honor. That meant he felt pretty strongly about the issue.

**I have been to Israel five times. I love the Jews. But God loves all men, and “accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right,” including Arabs. Do you agree with this? Do you think God’s favor today rests on the Church or on Israel? Do you think both? Can this be if one group accepts Jesus and another rejects Him? It is my opinion that God has kept His promises to the Jews to give them the Land, but they must accept Jesus as their Lord if they are to have God’s favor restored on them. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?**

v. 36 – Peter assumed that his Gentile believing audience had heard about Jesus. Peter didn’t refer to Jesus as a prophet or holy man, but as Lord of all. That would include Lord of those who were listening. Notice how quickly Peter got to the message of Jesus. For the early church and the original apostles, it was all about Jesus. What’s it all about today? I find that many are hesitant to mention Jesus’ name so as not to offend our Islamic or liberal “brothers and sisters.” Anyone who is ashamed or ambivalent about the name of Jesus isn’t a brother or sister, I am afraid. The issue of who Jesus is separates men as no other name can. But it unites men as no other name can as well.

vs. 37&38 – Again Peter assumed that the listeners were familiar with Jesus’ work in Israel. I love Peter’s description of Jesus here. How was Jesus able to do what He did? According to Peter, God anointed Jesus with the Spirit and power. That enabled Jesus to go about doing good and healing the sick. Peter concluded by saying that God was with Jesus. This doesn’t take away from Jesus’ divinity; He was truly God. But that wasn’t how He was able to do what He did. Jesus showed us how to do ministry, in that He relied on the Father to lead Him and the Spirit to empower Him. It was “team ministry” at its finest, and that is the legacy that He left for you and me. We must find what we are anointed to do and do it as God enables us—that is the only way to get anointed results. You can’t get anointed results from attending a seminar or reading a book. **What are you anointed to do? What does God empower you to do? How often do you do that? How can you do it more often than you are now?**

### **Day Six**

39 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is

the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

vs. 39&40 – The apostles were indeed witnesses, and that word in Greek is where we get the word “martyr.” The apostles saw and then spoke about what they saw. They left us a historical record of Jesus’ life that is as legitimate as any other recorded history. When you visit Israel, you hear the Jewish tour guides refer to Jesus as a historical figure. It was so strange to hear them talk like that. When I questioned them on it, they assured me that in their mind, Jesus had been alive. They just don’t believe He is still alive or that He is the Messiah. But their own historian Josephus wrote about Jesus life and death.

My point is that you don’t ever have to be hesitant to talk about Jesus with anyone. They may not agree with your theology, but Jesus is a much a part of history as Napoleon or Alexander the Great. And certainly you don’t have to succumb to any of the modern so-called theologians who speak of the Bible in terms of it being a myth. It is not. And once you open the door to any part of Scripture being a myth, where do you stop? Is the resurrection a myth? Jesus miracles? Those performed by the apostles?

The historic position of the Church is that the Scriptures are an accurate, firsthand account of God’s work among men. It is reliable and while not containing all the truth there is, is as much truth as God chose to reveal to us about Himself. The Bible isn’t an science or history book, but archaeology continues to verify the Bible’s accuracy where those disciplines are concerned. We cannot judge the Bible according to our western mindset, for it was written by a Middle-Eastern mind that didn’t always value an absolute accuracy of math, genealogies or chronology of events.

v. 41 – You may wonder why Jesus didn’t appear to the masses when He came back from the dead. He chose certain men and women who would bear accurate witness and spent His time prior to His ascension with them. You may think that more would have believed if they had seen Him, but that isn’t necessarily the case:

"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead ‘ (Luke 16:31).

And there is a blessing for those who didn’t see Jesus, but believed the report of His followers:

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

vs. 42&43 – Peter tied his witness to two things: Jesus’ commandment to do so and the prophetic voice of the Old Testament. Peter’s message of repentance and forgiveness of sins wasn’t a new message, but a continuation of the prophetic promise made through the ages. The apostles didn’t see themselves as doing a new thing, but continuing an “old thing” in a new way.

**Do you see what you are doing and your faith as tied not just to the book of Acts, but to the book of Genesis? Can you see that your faith isn't a New Testament thing, but an Old Testament one? This is an important perspective, for God didn't start something new with the apostles or with your conversion? We are all a continuation of God's salvation work throughout history. While God does new things, His work remains the same: Establishing His kingdom and redeeming fallen creation. You and I are privileged to carry on that work, basing our work on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles.**

### **Day Seven**

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were 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 "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

v. 44 – I heard a preacher say once that God interrupted Peter at this point because he was going on too long and sharing too much information. Remember, Peter had not chosen to be there and was probably still trying to figure out what to do. And then God helped him by pouring out the Holy Spirit on those Gentiles who listened.

vs. 45 & 46 – Perhaps my friend was right that God interrupted, for the response of Peter and his companions was one of astonishment that God would do for the Gentiles what He had done for the believing Jews. The Holy Spirit now inhabited “unclean” Gentiles! They were shocked! The Gentiles were now speaking in tongues! I am often amused by how many don't believe that tongues are for today or that we don't need tongues. My philosophy has always been that I want all that God has for me. What's more, I *need* all that God has for me. I need help to serve, pray, witness, teach, write and study. So if tongues is a part of that help, then I am for it! **Are you open to all that God has for you? Do you need more power or a boost of spiritual energy? Then ask God for the Holy Spirit and release yourself to that power.**

v. 47 – Peter made a logical connection between their baptism in the Holy Spirit and that of the Gentiles. If God hadn't refused them the Spirit, could he and his companions refuse them baptism? Notice that God didn't speak to Peter to do this. Peter concluded that it was the correct thing to do. Peter used his mind and didn't hand off his responsibility to act to the Lord. Let me borrow from a future Acts study verse to give you an example of how the apostles were to use the minds that God gave them:

After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, *concluding* that God had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:9-10 emphasis added).

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**Is there anything you should be doing or decision you should make that you have delegated to God? If there is, stop doing that and come to a righteous conclusion. Then act!**

v. 48 – Peter took responsibility and ordered them to be baptized. Don't waver and waffle on decisions that you should be making. Get rid of fear that you will make the wrong decision and replace it with the fear of making no decision.