

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Third Quarter 2018: *The Book of Acts*

### Lesson 6 The Ministry of Peter

#### Read for this week's study

Acts 9:32–43; Acts 10:9–16; Ephesians 2:11–19; Acts 11:1–26; Acts 12:1–18.

#### Memory Text

“Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears [H]im and does what is right is acceptable to [H]im’ ” (Acts 10:34, 35, NRSV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. At Lydda and Joppa
- III. At Cornelius's House
- IV. The Gift of the Spirit
- V. The Church in Antioch
- VI. Herod's Persecution
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “With Paul's departure to Tarsus, Peter is again the main character in Luke's narrative of the early days of the Christian church. Peter is portrayed in a sort of itinerant ministry throughout Judea and the surrounding regions. Acts here tells two brief miracle stories, the healing of Aeneas and the resurrection of Tabitha (Dorcas), which are then followed by the story of Cornelius in chapter 10. [...] This week's study also includes the rise of a new, short persecution—this time under King Herod—and its impact on the apostles, who had been spared in the persecution carried out by Paul.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Why does Luke tell the stories of Aeneas and Dorcas? Compare and contrast with Acts 3 – why is there no opposition now? Had it not been for Peter, Dorcas may never have made it into the pages of the New Testament. There were thousands of Aeneases and Dorcases who lived their lives in faith and hope, bearing the sorrows of life as well as celebrating its joys. They experienced fulfillment of the gospel, using their individual gifts in small acts of service to others. *Luke shows us that the ordinary people are not ordinary to God.*

3. What is the significance of the Cornelius story? Who had to do more learning: Cornelius or Peter? What is the significance of our memory text in this context? By the way, wasn't Peter encouraged to learn it multiple times during Jesus' public ministry?
4. First century Judaism was characterized by external boundary markers, superficial signs or practices that set one group apart from another. The most notorious were Sabbath, circumcision and clean & unclean food laws. How do you explain that more than a decade after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter still hadn't made much progress in re-thinking the boundary markers of Judaism? What about others in the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1-3)? Why did Peter take six men with him as witnesses when he went to Cornelius?
5. What is the Gospel according to Peter (10:36-42)? How is that different from the 'Gospel of the Personal Plan of Salvation' that many of us heard and accepted as children, teenagers or adults, and still believe today?
6. Research shows that 90% of children who grow up in homes that teach this 'Gospel of the Personal Plan of Salvation', or who grow up in churches that teach this type of gospel, pray the prayer of receiving Christ as their personal Savior—ninety percent! This seems like a high success rate. Yet when sociologists and behavioral scientists study thirty-five-year-olds who grew up in Christian homes, only twenty-two percent who prayed to receive Christ as children say they still follow Christ or attend church. Something is not working. It looks like we get the decisions, the numbers, but not the disciples.
7. Does our focus often seem to center on doctrines, music, moral or ethical persuasion, political leanings or party line rather than sharing Jesus and his character as Peter did?
8. This is what Peter talked about: He talked about God being with Jesus through the Spirit. He talked about Jesus' benevolence—as demonstrated in His table fellowship and kindness to people. He told them that Jesus was killed on the cross as an act of injustice by powerful rulers, but that God reversed this act of injustice and turned it into an act of transforming the world. Peter told people that God raised Jesus from the dead, about the resurrection as victory over death... He painted a picture which was attractive—eminently glorious and so attractive that a prominent Roman centurion wanted to be part of what God was doing in his time!
9. What is the significance of the events described in chapter 12 as a conclusion to the first half of the book? How can we see God working in our times and our places today? What decisions can we make, what directions can we take, so that we continue to write the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit' in and through our story?
10. One contemporary author wrote a book: *They Like Jesus But Not The Church* which is based on a series of interviews with non-Christians about how they perceive the institutionalized church and Jesus. In what ways can we demonstrate the attractiveness of the Jesus we know?

## Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: Tied in a bit with that, this question has come up regarding Deuteronomy 13 on the Bible Reference Sheet. It warns against signs and wonders. And yet when we look in the gospels and the story of Jesus, aren't these miracles that he performed; aren't they a basis for belief?

Graham: At Cana it says "these beginning of signs that he did." And they did say something, to be sure. His mother already trusted him. She said, "Do whatever he says." I think the miracles do get people started sometimes. But it's not the best evidence; miracles can be counterfeited. Look at the first three plagues in Egypt. A miracle is the poorest type of evidence. But if we're susceptible to it, our God will run the risk, sometimes, of using them. Like Gideon's wet fleece, and then the dry one—that doesn't speak well of Gideon. It speaks very well of God, who generously gave him those signs. God would rather that we would weigh the evidence. So I wouldn't want to say that he didn't use miracles at all, but they are an elementary first step in developing faith, and a hazardous one.

Lou: And the Deuteronomy 13 passage is pointing out the hazard there.

Graham: Yes. Because at the same time they are performing miracles, they are not telling the truth. I'm afraid that when I'm watching some programs on the air—where there is so much miracle- and faith-healing—I then listen to hear what they are saying about God. And if they are not telling the truth about God, then never mind those miracles. But I notice that the audience is being so swayed by the miracles, and so excited, they are not prepared to open their Bibles and do some hard study of the truth. That's the danger of miracle; it is so dramatic. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4 with Lou Venden, "God's Way of Restoring Trust" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

Lou: All right, you've spoken well about these incidents in the Old Testament, but now you referred this evening to when Jesus himself was here, and we have this period of his public ministry. Even during that period there, at Cana in the transforming of water into wine. Didn't that catch attention? Wasn't that use of miracles to establish authority?

Graham: These methods do have a beginning use. In fact, I wouldn't deny anybody the right of using whatever method he wishes to get attention. What follows after the miracle? And also with Christ, it's the way the miracle is conducted. Now to turn water into wine is not that unique. You remember when the water was bitter in the wilderness? Moses turned it from sour water into sweet. And didn't Elisha do something similar? That's not so remarkable. What's more remarkable there is that Jesus was attending a wedding, and he wanted it to be happy. And he was very pleased to. Don't we often read this at weddings, that he "sanctified" that wedding "with his presence?" Because he is the one who thought up marriage in the first place. I love it that his first miracle was at a wedding.

Lou: He did get attention.

Graham: He got attention, but then they had to test him—which they did, and some rejected him and some accepted him.

Lou: Take some of the other things such as the feeding of the five thousand or the feeding of the four thousand a little bit later. And that's recorded in all the gospels, I believe. Certainly it made an impact on the writers of the gospels and on the people. They were ready, if I remember it correctly—with the feeding of the five thousand—weren't they ready to crown him king right at that time?

Graham: That's right. Now this illustrates the point superbly. Because he realized that huge crowds were following him for the miracles, and that's all. And so you remember, he told them something very serious, meaning, "Unless you really accept me and my teachings you will not be saved." And they all left hm. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #7 with Lou Venden, "The Question of Authority" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/7MMCAG>*

Now, one thing we need to do is to look back at Acts, to the record of this meeting. They did mention a few more things, didn't they, like abstaining from immorality, and from food offered to idols; though Paul didn't follow that precisely, did he? "But then later, when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face." Why is he mentioning that here? Is he still underscoring the fact that he did not bow to anyone's authority with respect to gospel? But that he felt so certain about the gospel that even when someone like Peter acted in a manner that was not consistent with the gospel, he would correct him, to his face and in public. I think he's still on the same subject, because not until Galatians 3:1 does he really pick up his original question again:

When Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came [from headquarters], he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party [which seems to suggest that the folk at headquarters tended to lean that way]. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

## Further Study with Ellen White

I am afraid of anything that would have a tendency to turn the mind away from the solid evidences of the truth as revealed in God's Word. I am afraid of it; I am afraid of it. We must bring our minds within the bounds of reason, lest the enemy so come in as to set everything in a disorderly way. {2SM 43.2}

Impressions alone are not a safe guide to duty. The enemy often persuades men to believe that it is God who is guiding them, when in reality they are following only human impulse. {AA 279.2}

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. {Ed 17.2}

Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures. {GCDB, April 13, 1891 par. 5}

Divine wisdom will order the steps of those who put their trust in the Lord. Divine love will encircle them, and they will realize the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. {OHC 324.6}

Jesus longed to unfold the deep mysteries of the truth which had been hid for ages, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews, and "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 3:6. This truth the disciples were slow to learn, and the divine Teacher gave them lesson upon lesson. In rewarding the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of Sychar, He had already given evidence that He did not share the intolerance of the Jews. But the Samaritans had some knowledge of God; and the centurion had shown kindness to Israel. Now Jesus brought the disciples in contact with a heathen, whom they regarded as having no reason above any of her people, to expect favor from Him. He would give an example of how such a one should be treated. The disciples had thought that He dispensed too freely the gifts of His grace. He would show that His love was not to be circumscribed to race or nation. {DA 402.2}

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His

parting words are fulfilled, “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {AG 54.6}

Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His “little ones,” dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human. {DA 327.2}

In the temple at Jerusalem a low wall separated the outer court from all other portions of the sacred building. Upon this wall were inscriptions in different languages, stating that none but Jews were allowed to pass this boundary. Had a Gentile presumed to enter the inner enclosure, he would have desecrated the temple, and would have paid the penalty with his life. But Jesus, the originator of the temple and its service, drew the Gentiles to Him by the tie of human sympathy, while His divine grace brought to them the salvation which the Jews rejected. {DA 193.3}

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down, and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them. He reveals to them the Father, and the worship acceptable to Him who reads the heart. For such He uses no parables. To them, as to the woman at the well, He says, “I that speak unto thee am He.” {DA 194.2}

The same Spirit that in His stead was sent to be the instructor of His first co-workers, Christ has commissioned to be the instructor of His co-workers today. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20), is His promise. {Ed 96.1}

As we study the Scriptures, we should pray for the light of God’s Holy Spirit to shine upon the word, that we may see and appreciate its treasures. {COL 113.2}

Provision is made by God Himself for every soul that turns to the Lord, to receive His immediate cooperation. The Holy Spirit becomes His efficiency. {ML 47.4}

Every true child of God has the co-operation of heavenly beings. Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim, and angels that excel in strength, stand at God’s right hand, “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. {CC 336.5}

All heaven is interested in our salvation. The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, are commissioned to minister to those who shall be heirs of

salvation. They guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction. {6T 63.3}

The people of God will not be free from suffering; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied. While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that “walketh righteously” is the promise: “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Isaiah 33:15, 16; 41:17. {GC 629.2}

The value of man is estimated in heaven according to the capacity of the heart to know God. This knowledge is the spring from which flows all power. God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind; and He is ever seeking to bring the human mind into association with the divine. He offers us the privilege of co-operation with Christ in revealing His grace to the world, that we may receive increased knowledge of heavenly things. {COL 354.3}

Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity. {COL 355.1}

**Recommended Reading:**

*Christ's Object Lessons*, Chapter 27 “Who is My Neighbor?”

*The Desire of Ages*, Chapter 43 “Barriers Broken Down”

*Ministry of Healing*, Chapter 1 “Our Example”

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