

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

A. Christ's Ministry To Evangelize Segments Of All Mankind, Acts 8:26-11:18

3. Christ's Evangelization In The Line Of Japheth

a. Christ's Use Of Precedents To Lead Peter To Evangelize In Japheth's Gentile Line (Acts 9:32-10:23)

I. Introduction

- A. When God leads His people in the paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3b), those paths typically wind along **known** routes that have many **divine precedents**, cf. Gen. 24:10-15 with Gen. 29:1-6 as an example.
- B. Even if God **changes** a believer's direction, He carefully arranges for **gradual precedents** to arise to **realign** the believer with the **new** direction like he did in Peter's life and ministry in Acts 9:32-10:23.
- C. Indeed, God began with gentle and switched to much stronger events to set an **extended series** of **precedents** to get Peter to evangelize "unclean" Gentiles in Japheth's line as we note in Acts 9:32-10:23:

II. Christ's Use Of Precedents To Lead Peter To Evangelize In Japheth's Gentile Line, Acts 9:32-10:23.

- A. In Acts 9:32-43, Christ **gently BEGAN** to **signal** He would use Peter to disciple **Gentiles** as follows:
 1. In Acts 9:32-42, Christ confirmed He was using Peter in a great way, that his ministry was led by God:
 - a. Christ used Peter to heal a man who had been paralyzed for eight years, an event that led many at Lydda and the Plain of Sharon along Israel's Mediterranean Seacoast to trust in Christ, Acts 9:32-35.
 - b. Christ used Peter at Joppa to raise Dorcas from the dead, the first recorded resurrection by any of the apostles, Acts 9:36-41; Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 379. This caused many people in Joppa to believe in Christ, Acts 9:42.
 2. As these things occurred in partly Gentile territory, they signaled God's will to use Peter among them:
 - a. Both of these miracles were performed in territory that was heavily populated by Gentiles, *Ibid*.
 - b. Thus, the Lord signaled by them that He wanted to use Peter **among Gentiles!**
 3. In Acts 9:43, Christ assigned Peter to a ceremonially "unclean" tanner's residence in strain against his Hebrew heritage to prepare him to be open to evangelizing "unclean" Gentiles for Christ:
 - a. Tanners were considered ceremonially unclean by the Jews because "they were constantly in contact with the skins of dead animals (Lev. 11:40)," *Ibid*.
 - b. Thus, when the Lord let Peter stay many days at Simon the tanner's house without convicting him of sin, God was preparing Peter to reevaluate his former submission to the legal restrictions of his fathers that were affected by the Law that he might evangelize "unclean" Gentiles! (Acts 9:43)
- B. In Acts 10:1-22, Christ **more strongly signaled** He would use Peter to disciple **Gentiles** as follows:
 1. In Acts 10:1-8, the Lord gave a vision to Gentiles revealing that Peter would evangelize them: an angel of God appeared in a vision to Gentile Cornelius in Caesarea to tell him that Simon Peter who stayed at Simon the tanner's house by the sea in Joppa would tell him news from God, Acts 10:1-6.
 2. Thus, Cornelius in faith sent three servants to Joppa to contact Peter with this message, Acts 10:7-8.
 3. In Acts 10:9-16, Christ gave Peter a vision, preparing him to accept what the Law had formerly called "unclean" in preparation for him to go with Cornelius' men and evangelize his "unclean" household:
 - a. Peter initially rejected the vision God gave him to eat unclean animals because it countered the dietary restrictions of the Law (cf. Leviticus 11:1-47); however, this vision fit the precedent of his violation of his ceremonial uncleanness caused by staying with the tanner, Acts 10:9-15 with 9:43.
 - b. Then, the Lord's threefold command in the vision recalls His threefold call for Peter to feed His sheep back in John 21:15-17, a precedent to ready him to minister to Cornelius' household, 10:16.
 4. In Acts 10:17-22, Christ coordinated the timing of the arrival of Cornelius' men with Peter's vision, signaling his need to evangelize Cornelius' Gentile household, so Peter finally went with them, 10:23.

Lesson: God at first gently but later more forcibly kept signaling Peter that He wanted to use him to evangelize some Gentiles, so Peter finally yielded to God's will based on such extensive precedents.

Application: May we pay attention to the **PRECEDENTS** of God's **LEADING** in our lives to **KNOW** His **DIRECTION**, for even if He wants us to take a **NEW** course, He **REPEATEDLY** signals this fact!