

Back to the Future, Part 2

Dr. Mark Rutland June 18, 2017

Back to the Future — the Future at Joppa

A word about this series — the Book of Acts is often viewed historically, as a museum piece of the past — and nothing to do with the present. That teaching reduces it to a document in church archives.

*The other viewpoint is — Going Back to the Book of Acts is Going Back to the Future — There are **Three Major Church Intersections** in the book of Acts. Last week we looked at the Future of Shavuot — Pentecost.*

Today — Back to the Future — the Future at Joppa

Church after Pentecost

- a) there was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
- b) miracles were flowing
- c) waves of persecution had started
- d) Saul of Tarsus had become Paul, and been welcomed by the Apostles
- e) believers were growing in number

Thought — Peter was in a “good place” — performing miracles, raising from the dead. Entrenched in the Jewish traditions of practicing Christianity. God had something else in mind beyond the status quo — wanted to move him out of his place of comfort.

Second Major Intersection

- **Acts 9:36-10:48**

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. **37** And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. **38** And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. **39** Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. **40** But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. **41** And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. **42** And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. **43** And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. **10) 1** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, **2** A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. **3** He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. **4** And when he looked on him, he was

afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. **5** And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: **6** He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. **7** And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; **8** And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. **9** On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: **10** And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, **11** And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: **12** Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. **13** And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. **14** But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. **15** And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. **16** This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. **17** Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, **18** And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. **19** While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. **20** Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. **21** Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? **22** And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. **23** Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. **24** And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and he had called together his kinsmen and near friends. **25** And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. **26** But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. **27** And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. **28** And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. **29** Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? **30** And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, **31** And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. **32** Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. **33** Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. **34** Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: **35** But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. **36** The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) **37** That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; **38** How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. **39** And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: **40** Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; **41** Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. **42** And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. **43** To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. **44** While Peter yet spake

these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. **45** And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. **46** For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, **47** Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? **48** And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Peter's trance

- a) may be only place in Bible word "trance" used
- b) don't impose our 21st century Christian view on 1st century Jewish culture
- c) Peter was appalled by being told to eat food that was ritually unclean
- d) Peter argues with God three times — Peter "more religious" than God
- e) God tells Peter "don't call anything unclean that I have cleansed"
- e) while Peter is getting his revelatory understanding, a knock comes at the door
- f) God told Peter to go with the men at the door without doubting

Truth** — there are those seasons where we tend to "grip the rails," wanting to keep things the way they are; finally "having it all together." **That's when God comes in and stirs things up.

**The stirring is the disturbance.
The answer is at the door.
Receive the answer with open hands.**

Peter goes to Caesarea

- a) it is against Jewish law for Jews to go into Roman city — ritually unclean
- b) Cornelius is a Roman Centurion — most hated, over 100 soldiers
- c) Romans only knew depravity
- d) Peter preaches about Jesus who went about doing good
- e) the Holy Spirit fell while Peter was still preaching
- e) Peter saw "the Upper Room" happening again — only with Gentiles
- f) the Gentiles weren't "receiving Jesus" in the Jewish order of doing things
- g) but they were receiving same blessing — speaking in tongues
- h) Peter baptizes them
- i) when Peter returns to Jerusalem and has to explain why he baptized Gentiles, he says, "Can any many forbid water... which have received the Holy Ghost?"

***Truth** — the Holy Spirit is continually pushing walls; blasting us out of legalism, out of sectarianism — broadening, quickening, illuminating us.*

There are no safe zones with the Holy Spirit.

Lessons from Joppa

- a) it is likely that the reason our church is in Leiper's Fork is because Peter went to Caesarea— obeying God and preaching to the Gentiles
- b) God won't read all the books we write about how He does things
- c) God wants to get rid of all of our preconceived notions and prejudices
- d) it is probably going to cost something

Truth — when Kingdom Issues are at the door — God wants to stir us up; lead us; and broaden our minds.

**Getting out on the edge with God is an adventure.
Like Peter — follow with faith and boldness of heart.**

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of cultural religious prejudices might you have?
2. Are you at a comfortable place in your Christian life?
3. Are you “willing” to allow the Holy Spirit to stir you up?
4. Have you ever found yourself being more religious than God? In what way?
5. Discuss, “There are no safe zones with the Holy Spirit.”