

July 17-23, 2023

Acts 10–15

“THE WORD OF GOD GREW AND MULTIPIED”

Summary: *Acts 10. An angel ministers to Cornelius—Peter, in a vision, is commanded to take the gospel to the Gentiles—The gospel is taught by witnesses—The Holy Ghost falls upon the Gentiles.*

Acts 11. God grants the gift of repentance to the Gentiles—The disciples are first called Christians at Antioch—The Church is guided by revelation.

Acts 12. Saul persecutes the Church—The martyrdom of James is described—An angel frees Peter from prison—The Lord slays Herod by disease—The Church grows.

Acts 13. Saul and Barnabas are called to missionary service—Saul, now called Paul, curses a sorcerer—Christ is a descendant of David—Paul offers the gospel to Israel, then to the Gentiles.

Acts 14. Persecution attends the spread of the gospel—Paul heals a crippled man; Paul and Barnabas are hailed as gods—Paul is stoned and revived; he preaches—Elders are ordained.

Acts 15. Great dissension arises at Antioch concerning circumcision—The Apostles at Jerusalem decide the issue—Paul chooses Silas as his companion.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What senses are used in learning truths?

The imagery of
sight, sound, and

motion used in the New Testament is a powerful part of Holy Land doctrine and history being studied. “Sight” refers to the visual aspects; “sound” is in the and Jewish doctrinal message that is spoken; and “motion” refers to the hours of the day and travel time. From time to time, social norms in gospel living have been updated. This is usually due to the readiness of God’s children to comprehend and adhere to His teachings. Unfortunately, the sense of time or timing for earthly mankind often obscures the heavenly meanings of God’s timing or His eternal clock. “In answer to the question--Is not the reckoning of God's time, angel's time, prophet's time, and man's time, according to the planet on which they reside? I answer, Yes. But there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have

belonged to it.” (**Doctrine & Covenants 130:4-5**)

What is the “central” lesson in the Cornelius/Peter experience?

This lesson shows that it was time for all worthy people to receive the covenants of the Gospel. The time frame enveloping Cornelius’ “ninth hour of the day” vision to send for Peter from Jaffa, Peter’s vision in Jaffa with instructions for him to go to Caesarea, and then Cornelius recounting his vision to Peter as he arrived at Caesarea is a three nights and three days chiasmus. The center point is Peter’s vision of salvation for all. The time when Jesus “gave up the ghost” was the ninth hour of the day. Three nights and three days later He completed the atonement. His resurrection provided salvation for all. That is the central doctrinal point of the Gospel. The transition from “the times of the Jews” to include “the times of the Gentiles” was socially difficult for many members at that time, even though as

Jesus had chosen His disciples, He sent them to teach first the Jews and then the Gentiles. To this day, Jews feel that the *Torah* (law) was for them and that Gentiles had a different standard (the *Noahcide* laws). They are found in the Bible. **(Genesis 9:8-17)** The Babylonian *Talmud* **(Avodah Zarah 64b)** interpreted the stranger to be all gentiles who accept the seven Noahide commandments comprising the basic laws of morality: **(1)** a *positive* injunction to set up courts that justly enforce social laws, **(2)** the *prohibitions* of blasphemy, i.e. intolerance of worshipping the one God of the universe; **(3)** of idolatry; **(4)** of grave sexual immorality, such as incest and adultery; **(5)** of murder; **(6)** of theft; **(7)** and of eating a limb of live animals, which is an example of cruelty.

Which is God's plan, "all laws for all" or "some laws for some?"

The original true doctrine of salvation for all – was lost. The term used for the Jews or Children of Israel was "the people" and non-Jews were referred to as "the Gentiles." "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." **(Acts 13:46)** "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee," **(Acts 26:17)** "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." **(Acts 26:23)** "Taking the dispensation of the meridian of time as a starting point, the gospel was preached first to the Jews and thereafter to the Gentiles. Then dropping down to the dispensation of the fulness of times

we find the gospel message going first to the Gentiles, with a promise that it will hereafter go to the Jews. Thus, the first

shall be last and the last first." **(Bruce R. Mc Conkie, Mormon Doctrine, P. 721)** "And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last." **(1 Nephi 13:42)**

What can I learn from the visuals in the vision?

Peter's Vision of the Sheet (*Talith*) in New Testament times was in the city of Jaffa some twenty feet below today's city level. Simon Peter was staying there at the home of Simon the Tanner when he received a remarkable vision. It was the sixth hour of the day (the sixth hour is what in modern times we call noon). Simon Peter apparently was praying (religious Jews pray three times a day, covering their heads and using a special prayer cloth, a *talith*, over their head and/or shoulders). During his prayers, Peter saw a sheet with knitted or knotted corners—maybe like the typical Jewish prayer shawl, a *talith* with its knotted corners—filled with all sorts of common or unclean foods. Today, this would be called unkosher. An angel commanded Peter to eat of those foods, contrary to Jewish dietary law. The vision was a conflict (or contrast) in symbolism: The *talith* used in the temple as a holy garment, its 613 knots and strings symbolizing the laws given by Moses, was now "upgraded" **(Acts 10:11-16)** with foods that previously had been forbidden by the Law of Moses. Visions really do contain pictures and sounds that also convey vital information.

What does timing teach me about the Savior?

Consider the vision of Cornelius. Connecting Peter's vision with his

experience creates an even clearer picture. On the previous day some thirty-five miles to the north at Caesarea, a Roman centurion named Cornelius received a vision at the “ninth hour” of the day. (Again, in modern times that is three o’clock in the afternoon). In the vision an angel told Cornelius to send for Peter so that he could teach Cornelius the truth. Incidentally, the time to travel the distance of thirty-five miles would take the better part of two days, or at least an overnight journey. Cornelius’s invitation to Peter arrived just as Peter was contemplating the meaning of the unusual vision of “unkosher” foods he had just been commanded to eat. He lodged his non-Jewish, Roman guests, overnight, then departed with them to Caesarea—which required another overnight stay. Peter was soon to learn of the correlation of these two heavenly manifestations. When Peter arrived to visit in the house of the Roman Cornelius, again contrary to Jewish custom, he related that God had updated or changed the food laws of Israel (showing Israel’s previous singularity), “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (Acts 10:34-35) Not just Israelites, but all peoples were able to become children of the covenant. The three nights and three days is a subtle reminder of Jehovah saving Jonah at Jaffa, and later from Jaffa came the reminder that He saves all!

How can I see another “point?”

The scriptural report of the Peter/Cornelius events is written in a chiasmus: First we read Cornelius’s vision; next we learn of Peter’s vision. But when Peter arrives in Caesarea, the vision of Cornelius is repeated. The center point is the Savior’s message: “Salvation is for all people.” “Behold, God is my

salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.” (Isaiah 12:2) The name of Jesus is Jeho-Shua. It come from the words, “Jehovah saves” or “salvation is of the Lord” (Jehovah). Since salvation is of the Lord, the direction we need for our process of being saved comes from Him, too.

How vital is it to know that the most important prophet – is the living one?

That principle is constant when there are living prophets on the earth. Gentiles being able to become full covenant members at the time of the Apostle and Prophet Peter was similar to “all worthy people” receiving the priesthood (or to be blessed by priesthood functions) at the time of President and Prophet Spencer W. Kimball. “Priesthood limitation on blacks was changed by revelation. The things of God cannot be understood by the spirit of men. It is impossible to always measure and weigh all spiritual things by man’s yardstick or scales. Admittedly, our direct and positive information is limited. I have wished the Lord had given us a little more clarity in the matter. But for me, it is enough. The prophets for 133 years of the existence of the Church have maintained the position of the prophet of the Restoration that the Negro could not hold the priesthood nor have the temple ordinances which are preparatory for exaltation. I believe in the living prophets as much or almost more than the dead ones. They are here to clarify and reaffirm. I have served with and under three of them. The doctrine or policy has not varied in my memory. I know it could. I know the Lord could change his policy and release the ban and forgive the possible error which brought about the deprivation. If the time comes, that he will do, I am sure. These smart members who would force the issue, and there are many of them, cheapen the issue and certainly

bring into contempt the sacred principle of revelation and divine authority.” “. . . I am not sure that there will be a change, although there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord who has established it, and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case he should ever wish to make a change.” (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Page 448) Then came the marvelous proclamation that Priesthood blessings were available for all worthy members. It is quoted as follows in the Doctrine & Covenants -- Official Declaration 2.

June 8, 1978, To all general and local priesthood officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world:

Dear Brethren:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the

Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedeck Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of all his children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of his authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel.

Sincerely yours,

Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney
The First Presidency

What comfort do I feel as I realize the Prophet entreating with God?

President Kimball went on to teach about the process of change that was directed by God. “. . . millions of people will be affected by the revelation which came. I remember very vividly that day after day I

walked to the temple and ascended to the fourth floor where we have our solemn assemblies and where we have our meetings of the Twelve and the First Presidency. After everybody had gone out of the temple, I knelt and prayed. I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and put them into place. Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what he wanted. I talked about it to him and said, "Lord, I want only what is right. We are not making any plans to be spectacularly moving. We want only the thing that thou dost want, and we want it when you want it and not until." ". . . Finally we had the feeling and the impression from the Lord, who made it

very clear to us, that this was the thing to do to make the gospel universal to all worthy people." (**Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Page 448-449**)

What reassurance can I realize in accepting the "signs of the times?"

Just as in Peter's time, there are those who find change, even prompted from the Lord, difficult to understand. Through various visual travel experiences that the ensuing chapters in the New Testament teach, we can see the same "sound doctrine" that salvation is for all, to the ends of the earth. Adjustments in the health law, now known as the Word of Wisdom, the social acceptance of non-Israelites into the House of Israel, along with the broader assignment of priesthood responsibilities (throughout the ages) actually amplify the accountability of those who were first to share their blessings with everyone, and the realization that then and now, we and they are fulfilling "signs of the times," the Lord's words grew and were multiplied.