

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 30: "God Is No Respector of Persons" (Acts 10-14; Acts 15:1-35)

- Peter learns in a vision that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles.
- Peter is miraculously freed from prison.
- Saul (now known as Paul) and Barnabas preach the gospel to the Gentiles.
- The Apostles determine that Gentiles do not need to keep the law of Moses.

A study of this lesson will help us recognize that the gospel is for all people and that the Church is guided by continuing revelation.

Introduction

"We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

-9th Article of Faith

President James E. Faust:

"I wish to discuss a special dimension of the gospel: the necessity for constant communication with God through the process known as divine revelation. This principle is basic to our belief. President Wilford Woodruff declared, "Whenever the Lord had a people on the earth that he acknowledged as such, that people were led by revelation" (The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, sel. G. Homer Durham [1946], 138). I affirm at the beginning that the inspiration of God is available to all who worthily seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is particularly true of those who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I wish to focus, however, on God's communications to all of His children through prophets, as distinguished from personal revelation received by individual members of the Church and others. The prophets, seers, and revelators have had and still have the responsibility and privilege of receiving and declaring the word of God for the world.

Individual members, parents, and leaders have the right to receive revelation for their own responsibilities but have no duty nor right to declare the word of God beyond the limits of their own responsibilities."

(First Presidency Message, August 1996)

This lesson discusses a revelation that was given to the members of the Church shortly after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

GOD'S WORDS



NEVER CEASE

NEXT WEEK:
#31 —And So Were the Churches Established in the Faithll (Acts 15:36-18:22; 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Peter learns in a vision that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. (Acts 10:1-11:18)

Acts 10:1-2; 30-31 Cornelius was a righteous man who believed in God, but he was a Gentile (non-Jew).

Acts 10:3-6 The angel's message to Cornelius was for him to call to Peter.

Acts 10:7-8, 33 Cornelius reacted to this message with immediate obedience. Note: Consider his example when you have promptings from the Spirit.

Acts 10:9-16 records that while Cornelius's men were traveling to Joppa, Peter had a vision.

Acts 10:11-12 In the vision; Peter saw what he considered unclean or common animals.

Acts 10:13-14 Peter was told to kill and eat. But Peter resisted because he did not want to eat animals that were considered unclean under the Law of Moses.

Acts 10:15-16 The Lord responded to Peter's concern by assuring Peter that God had cleansed them.

Acts 10:28, 34-35 As he met with Cornelius, Peter understood his dream to mean that the gospel was for all people, not just the

Jews. "God is no respecter of persons" means that God will provide every person with the opportunity to receive the blessings available through the plan of salvation. The Gentiles were represented in the dream by unclean animals because the Jews thought the Gentiles were spiritually unworthy or unclean, like the animals that the Law of Moses forbade Jews to eat. By saying that the animals in the dream were now "cleansed," the Lord was telling Peter that the gospel should now be preached to all people.

Acts 10:36-43 After Peter explained his dream, he began teaching Cornelius and his friends. His first sermon to them was about the Savior.

Acts 10:44, 46 As Peter was preaching, the Holy Ghost fell upon them.

Acts 10:47-48 (also see Acts 11:15-17) This convinced Peter that Cornelius and his friends should be baptized because they had received the Holy Ghost, just like the other disciples.

Acts 11:1-3 Some Church members reacted badly when they heard that Peter had been teaching the gospel to Gentiles. These members were upset because they did not consider the Gentiles to be part of God's chosen people.

Acts 11:4-18 Church members' opinions changed and they accepted this new circumstance after Peter told them about his vision and his experience with Cornelius.

John 7:17; 2 Nephi 28:30; D&C 6:11, 14-15 When we receive new instructions from our Church leaders, even if we initially dislike the instructions or find them difficult to understand, we should obey the instructions, pray, and seek further inspiration and enlightenment.

Peter was the one who received the revelation to teach the gospel to the Gentiles because he was the leader of the Church at that time, just as Pres. Hinckley receives revelation today for the entire Church.

D&C 43:2-6 It is important to have only one person who receives revelation for the entire Church, so that we may not be deceived.

Peter is miraculously freed from prison. (Acts 12)

Acts 12:1-4 King Herod killed the Apostle James, then cast Peter into prison under heavy guard.

Acts 12:5 Members of the Church responded to Peter's imprisonment with prayers to God.

D&C 43:12; D&C 93:51; D&C 107:22 Our prayers help the prophet and other Church leaders today.

President Joseph F. Smith stated, "*There never should be a day pass but all of the people composing the Church should lift up their voices in prayer to the Lord to sustain his servants*" (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed. [1939], 223).

Acts 12:6-10 Peter escaped from prison when an angel led him to

freedom. Other times when the Lord has miraculously preserved someone's life until that person completed his or her earthly mission include these examples from the scriptures: Daniel; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Abinadi; Alma and Amulek; and Joseph Smith.

Acts 12:21-23 After Peter's escape, Herod was struck dead by an angel of the Lord. Compare what happened to Herod with what happened to the Church, as described in the next verse 24—the word of God grew and multiplied.



Saul (now known as Paul) and Barnabas preach the gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts 13-14)

Acts 13:1-3 The calling of Saul and Barnabas shows how Church members are called to God's service. There is a need for prayer and fasting, revelation, and priesthood authority in calling members to serve in the Church.

Acts 13:14-15 The rulers of the synagogue in Antioch invited Paul to speak in the Sabbath service

Acts 13:23-31, 38-41 Paul's main message was the need to accept Jesus, the promised Messiah.

Acts 13:42-44, 48 The Gentiles in Antioch responded to the missionaries and their message with a request for them to stay and preach more on the next Sabbath.

Acts 13:45-47 Some of the Jews persecuted Paul and Barnabas for

what they considered false doctrine.

Acts 14:8-13 The people in Lystra reacted by acclaiming Paul and Barnabas as gods when Paul healed the crippled man. Jupiter and Mercurius were false gods the people worshipped.

Acts 14:14-18 Paul and Barnabas responded to this praise and attention with great concern. True teachers of the word of God always seek to give God the glory and turn attention away from themselves.

Acts 13:43-45, 50; Acts 14:1-6, 19 In each city Paul and Barnabas visited, they found people eager to accept the gospel, but they also found people who persecuted them and stirred up others against the Church.

Acts 14:21-23 Paul and Barnabas returned to each of the cities even though they had been persecuted because they had established branches of the Church in the cities, and they returned to encourage and instruct the new members of these branches.

President Gordon B. Hinckley remarked: *"With the ever increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with 'the good word of God' (Moro. 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things"* (Ensign, May 1997, 47).

The Apostles determine that Gentiles do not need to keep the law of Moses. (Acts 15:1-35)

Acts 15:1-2 Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to resolve the issue of circumcision (See also Bible Dictionary, "Circumcision," 646.)

Circumcision was symbolic of the entire Law of Moses. A circumcised man was one who kept the law. Although Jesus Christ had fulfilled the Law of Moses, some Jewish Christians still practiced it and wanted

Gentile converts to practice it as well. The dispute was resolved when, after a thorough discussion, the Apostles decided through inspiration not to require circumcision.

The events described in **Acts 15:6-31** demonstrate the pattern by which decisions about Church policy and practices are made: 1) Church leaders meet to consider the matter

(verse 6); 2) They discuss the matter thoroughly (verses 7-21); 3) They make a decision in accordance with the Lord's will (verses 19-21); 4) The Holy Ghost confirms that the decision is correct (verse 28); 5) The decision is announced to the Saints for sustaining (verses 22-31).

Conclusion

Under the direction of inspired leadership, the new Church began to expand. It was revealed to Peter that all persons are invited to partake of the blessings of the gospel. We are also blessed in our day, to have leadership led by the Lord to guide the Church as it expands throughout the world.

