



Walking with the Spirit through the Book of Acts

Pastor Michael Cranford

Copyright © 2024 Michael Cranford

Schedule

April 7	The Holy Spirit	Sept 8	Acts 9:32-10:48
April 14	Acts 1:1-9	Sept 16	Acts 11:1-12:25
April 21	Acts 1:10-26		
April 28	Acts 2:1-13		
May 5	Acts 2:14-47		
May 12	BREAK (Mother's Day)		
May 19	Acts 3:1-26		
May 26	Acts 4:1-21		
June 2	Acts 4:22-5:11		
June 9	Acts 5:12-42		
June 16	BREAK (Father's Day)		
June 23	Acts 6:1-15		
June 30	Acts 7:2-60; 8:1-4		
July 7	Acts 8:5-25		
July 14	Acts 8:26-9:31		



Hero #4 – Peter

The Traditional Jew Becomes the Bridge to the Gentiles (part II)

I. That the Jewish Christians were operating from the old (and incorrect) mindset is clear when they accused Peter of having table fellowship with Gentiles. (Acts 11:1-3)

The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.” (Acts 11:1-3)



Hero #4 – Peter

The Traditional Jew Becomes the Bridge to the Gentiles (part II)

2. The ministry of Christ already prepared Peter and the apostles for the “new wineskin” of the new covenant in Him. The new covenant implies a change in traditional Jewish social categories. This also implies that Jewish religion had gone wrong in its fundamental understanding of clean and unclean. (See Luke 5:27-39)

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Hero #4 – Peter

The Traditional Jew Becomes the Bridge to the Gentiles (part II)

They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”

Jesus answered, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, ‘The old is better.’” (Luke 5:27-39)

Hero #4 – Peter

The Traditional Jew Becomes the Bridge to the Gentiles (part II)

3. Peter recounted what happened so that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem could follow along the same process that God used to change his mindset. (Acts 11:4-17)

Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

“I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

“The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

Hero #4 – Peter

The Traditional Jew Becomes the Bridge to the Gentiles (part II)

“Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:4-17)

Hero #4 – Peter

The Traditional Jew Becomes the Bridge to the Gentiles (part II)

4. The Spirit authenticated this change in the law by expressly working outside the social boundaries of the law. The Jerusalem church, not really understanding, nonetheless accepted the purposes of the Spirit. (Acts 11:18)

When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.” (Acts 11:18)

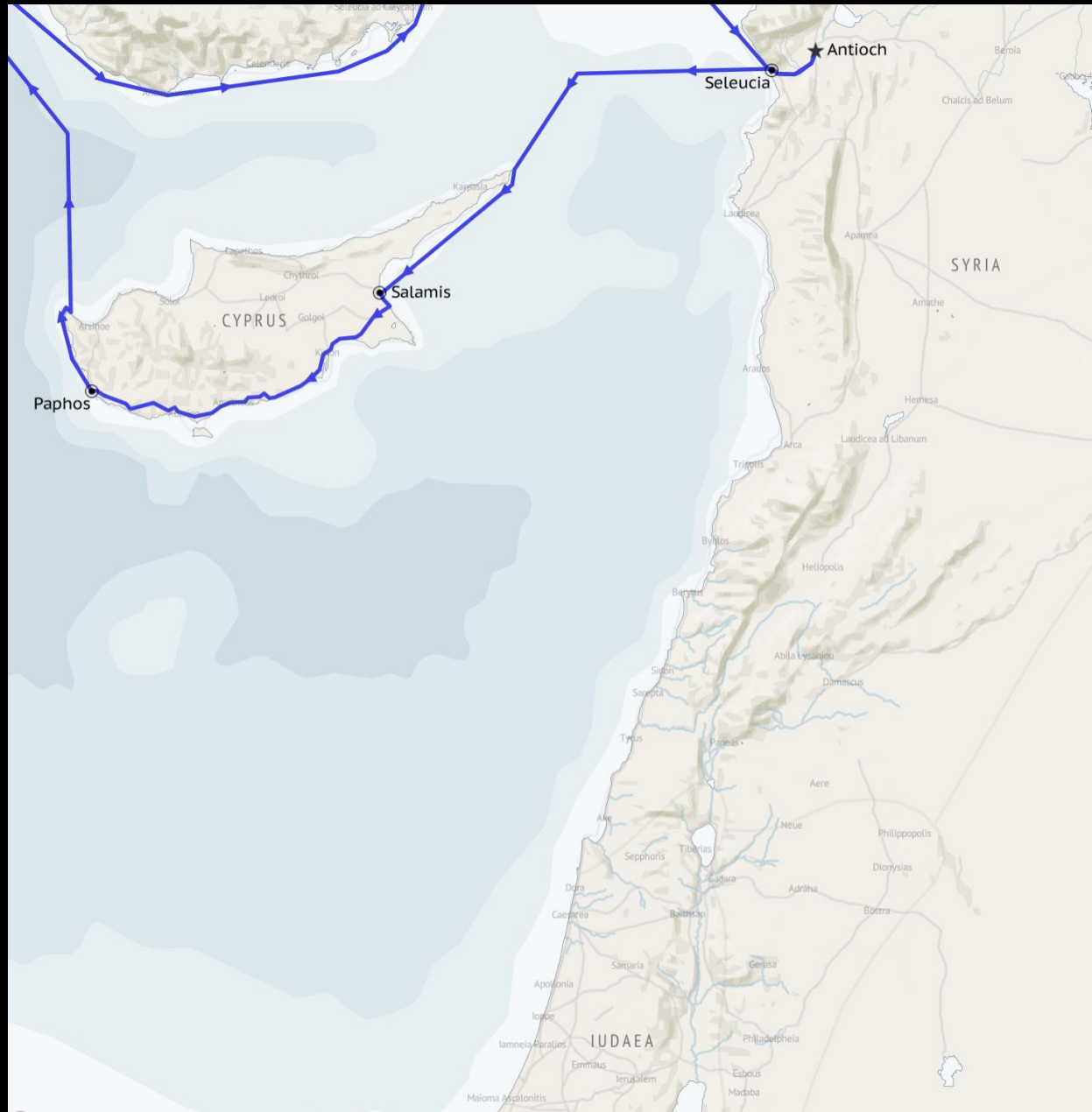


Phase 3 of the Gospel: The Gentiles Turn to the Lord

1. In the case of Peter, he was used to confirm that Gentiles who were Godfearers were saved, but then the gospel spread to Antioch (in Syria), and many (previously pagan) Greeks come to Christ. (Acts 11:19-21)

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-21)





Phase 3 of the Gospel: The Gentiles Turn to the Lord

2. This movement in Antioch was different from what Peter experienced, so the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch to witness what was happening. Barnabas (true to his name) encouraged the new believers. (Acts 11:22-24)

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, **full of the Holy Spirit and faith**, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:22-24)



Phase 3 of the Gospel: The Gentiles Turn to the Lord

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:4)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them... (Acts 4:8)

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:31)

Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. (Acts 6:3)

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; (Acts 6:5)



Phase 3 of the Gospel: The Gentiles Turn to the Lord

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power... (Acts 6:8)

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:55)

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 9:17)



Phase 3 of the Gospel: The Gentiles Turn to the Lord

3. Barnabas (apparently) was inadequate to teach the new Greek converts, so he went to Tarsus to locate Saul (Acts 11:25-26). The last we saw Saul, he was in Jerusalem, debating the Hellenistic Jews, then he was smuggled to Tarsus for safety (Acts 9:29-30).

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11:25-26)



Phase 3 of the Gospel: The Gentiles Turn to the Lord

4. The coming of a prophesied famine meant there was a chance for the new Gentile converts to help the (Jewish) church in Jerusalem. Barnabas and Paul were chosen to carry the aid. (Acts 11:27-30)

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30)



Insight Episode: The work of the Spirit cannot be stopped.

1. Persecution in Jerusalem intensified, and James is put to death. Luke mentions this as a “flavor” comment, without giving us details. This emboldens Herod (Agrippa I) to arrest Peter. (Acts 12:1-3)

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. (Acts 12:1-3)



Insight Episode: The work of the Spirit cannot be stopped.

2. Peter is placed under an arrest in the citadel of secular power. It is a context for prayer and the Spirit to work. It is the fulfillment and confirmation of Peter as a man who fits God's pattern—someone he can use in power. (Acts 12:4-5)

After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. (Acts 12:4-5)



Insight Episode: The work of the Spirit cannot be stopped.

2. Peter is placed under an arrest in the citadel of secular power. It is a context for prayer and the Spirit to work. It is the fulfillment and confirmation of Peter as a man who fits God's pattern—someone he can use in power. (Acts 12:4-5)

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.” (Luke 22:31-34)



Insight Episode: The work of the Spirit cannot be stopped.

3. The nature of Peter's rescue reveals a critical insight into the Spirit's purposes: Nothing can stop them. This is not an isolated adventure but an essential thread in the tapestry of the Spirit's plan for his people. (Acts 12:6-19)

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

Insight Episode: The work of the Spirit cannot be stopped.

Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

“You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

Insight Episode: The work of the Spirit cannot be stopped.

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.

In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. (Acts 12:6-19)



Insight Episode: The work of the Spirit cannot be stopped.

4. Luke reminds us that those who oppose the work of the gospel are accountable for their decisions. God is not only able and willing to save his people but to bring evil to justice. (Acts 12:20-25)

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.