

The Life of Peter 4

Acts 1:12-14.

Following the ascension, the 11 disciples, plus a few women, including Jesus's mother Mary, plus Jesus's 4 brothers were all together in the upper room. This could well be the room first mentioned in Luke 22:20-22, the Passover meal, it's likely to be the setting of Jesus's first appearance to the disciples in John 20:19-20 and here they are, after the ascension. There's about 120 people in the room, all praying together.

It was Peter that stood up, quoted Psalm 109:8 and proposed that Judas be replaced and a process be started that led to Mathias being appointed an apostle. Acts 1:15-26. Was Mathias, the disciples' choice, rather than God's choice; whereas God had in mind a different Apostle, namely Saul of Tarsus, or were there to be 13 apostles? Note other than these two verses, Mathias never gets a mention.

Acts 2:14-29 Peter gives his first sermon and 3,000 were converted. Acts 3:1-10 a miracle healing. Acts 3:13-30 Peter's second sermon and 5,000 added to the church. Peter shows that he really is full to overflowing with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5 verses 3-4 and 8, Peter passes a death sentence upon Ananais and Saphira for cheating God. This passage seems to contradict the message of the Gospel; there's no atonement for our sins, which are all covered by Jesus's blood. He has taken away our punishment and by His stripes we are healed, Isaiah 53-5.

Acts 10:9-16. Peter's dream of meat on a sheet. In Leviticus 11 there's a long list of animals, birds and sea creatures and whether they are permitted or forbidden to eat. Cloven hoof AND what chews the cud are OK (sheep, cows and goats). Everything else, including paws and claws is off menu. Fish are OK but anything that crawls along the sea or river bed are not. Birds of prey and most insects are all off menu.

We can assume from Peter's reaction, that the creatures on the sheet were non-kosher and so despite being very hungry, he was not going to partake even despite being given the all clear by God Himself, three times. After that, the offer was withdrawn and Peter remained hungry.

Peter thought, that was a weird vision, he didn't understand it, until the Holy Spirit told him that there were three men coming to collect him and take him to a Roman centurion's house in Caesarea; he was called Cornelius. It was then that the meaning of the vision became clear. He explained the vision to Cornelius in Acts 10:28. Peter is talking through his tush here, there's nowhere in the Old Testament that prevents a Jew from entering the house of a gentile, indeed there are many examples of men of God that did exactly that. Can you think of any? Joshua 2:1, 2 Kings 8:1-6. So where do you think Peter got that from? Mark 7:6-8. it's what Jesus calls a tradition of men, what the Labour Party calls Zionism and what wider society calls racism. Was Peter racist? What scriptures promote an anti-racism message? Luke 10: 25-37 (Good Samaritan), Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 8:26-40. Also Old Testament verses, Hosea 2:23, Amos 9:11-12.

Let's read Acts 10:34-43. Peter's sermon that gets interrupted by the Holy Spirit. It was at that point that Cornelius, his friends, family and servants all instantly believed. What's in that sermon that had such a dramatic and instant reaction?

Acts 10:44-46. The shock and surprise of the Jewish believers. Where did they get this notion from that God is exclusive to the Jew? Zechariah 2:11, Luke 4:25-28.

Are there areas of your life that need attention, especially attitudes that have an adverse effect on your faith? If not, maybe a prayer that God enlightens you in the same way that He did to Peter.

Evidence of Peter's change of mind. Acts 10:44-48. Peter had learnt the lesson about Jewish supremacy.

Acts 12:1-19.

Peter is imprisoned and escapes. Look at v 5-10 regarding his escape. Just look at how this Category A prisoner just walks past doors, shackles and chains. The levels of divine intervention are nothing short of amazing! How did this come about? Verse 12. There was a prayer meeting. I wonder how they composed their prayers to get such a dramatic answer. Any ideas?

V18-19 Look what happened to the prison staff. Compare with Act 16:27-28.

Acts 15:1-2. A heresy is preached in Antioch and Paul and Barnabas take issue but the heretics were having none of it and appealed to a higher authority. They get their answer in Acts 15:6-11. Peter is by now, unequivocal in his opposition to those wanting to merge the Law with the Gospel.

That's the last we hear of Peter in Acts. Paul steps forward and plays a bigger role in the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:11-16. Peter visits Antioch and it seems old habits die hard. Eating with Gentiles is OK, so long as there's no other Jews about, in which case, you don't. This had become widespread amongst the Jewish believers, even Barnabas (v13) who was Paul's right hand man. So Paul takes them to task over it. Anyway, what's Paul's problem, who eats with who?

2 Peter 1:11-15. Peter knows that his time is nearly up.