

## **Bi134 Acts**

### ***Lesson Bi134-19 Peter Ministers in Judea***

First century citizens had no telegraph, radio, or television, and certainly no cellphones. News spread, for the most part, by word of mouth. While at times news spread rapidly, sometimes it took a long time. Saul had been the ringleader of the persecution against the church. Even his name was bad news to Christians. But when Saul was converted, believers passed on that good news quickly!

Things calmed down for the saints throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. As a result, the apostles in Jerusalem were able to move about more freely. So, Peter decided to tour western Judea and check on the saints there. Leaving Jerusalem, he went about 42 kilometers (26 miles) northwest to the town of Lydda. When he arrived, he was taken to the bedside of a man named Aeneas. The man was crippled and had been bedridden for eight long years.

Peter addressed the man. "Aeneas," he said, "Jesus Christ heals you!" Then, looking him straight in the eye, Peter ordered him, "Get up and roll up your mat." Immediately Aeneas jumped to his feet and began to walk. Everyone who saw this miracle was amazed. Later, when the people of Lydda and nearby Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, many turned to the Lord.

Peter's ministry in Judea shows us that the apostles not only evangelized the lost; they also ministered to the needs of the believers. However, even their pastoral care for the people had evangelistic implications. When outsiders observed the Lord's goodness toward his people, many sinners turned to Christ.

Peter's words to Aeneas, "Jesus Christ heals you," reminds us that Jesus is the healer. Even when Christ uses one of his ministers to heal the sick, we must never forget that the healing comes from Christ not from any person. Peter's words tell us that even after his ascension into heaven, Jesus continued his healing ministry on earth. Before Jesus returned to heaven he promised his disciples, "Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:20). Truly, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

About the time Aeneas was healed, two messengers arrived from the nearby seaport of Joppa. "Please come at once," they begged Peter, "our dear friend Tabitha is very sick, at the point of death." Peter immediately set off for Joppa about 20 kilometers (12 miles) away from Lydda. Now, Tabitha was a wonderful Christian woman. Some people referred to her as Dorcas, which means 'gazelle' in the local language. She was known for the good deeds she did and how she was always helping the poor.

When Peter arrived in Joppa, he was given the sad news that the beloved Tabitha had died. Peter responded, "Take me to her." When he arrived at the upper room where she had been laid, he found her body surrounded by some widows whom she had cared for. With sobs they showed Peter the robes and other clothes she had made for them.

Peter asked them to leave him alone in the room with the body. After they had left, he knelt and prayed. He then spoke directly to the dead woman, commanding her, “Tabitha, get up!” Amazingly, she opened her eyes, looked at Peter, and sat up. Peter then took her by the hand and helped her to stand. When he presented her alive to the people, they all rejoiced at what God had done. This great miracle became known all over Joppa. Many people came to the Lord as a result.

We learn three important ministry lessons from the account of Peter’s ministry in western Judea:

First, we learn that we, like Peter, must at all times remain full of the Spirit and open to his directions. Peter was first filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. He then preached a powerful Spirit-anointed message and 3,000 people were saved. Now several years later, Peter is still ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit. How did he know that Jesus wanted to raise Aeneas from his sickbed and Tabitha from the dead? He knew these things because he was full of the Holy Spirit and able to hear his voice.

Jesus once explained why he healed a certain crippled man. “The Son can do nothing by himself,” he explained, “he can do only what he sees his Father doing” (John 5:19). In other words, Jesus always listened to his Father and did what the Father told him to do. This same thing happened with Peter. He heard the voice of the Spirit telling him what to do. Because of this, he was able to say to Aeneas, “Jesus Christ heals you.” Later, he was able to raise Tabitha from the dead because the Spirit had revealed to him that it was God’s will to do so. We, like Peter, must learn to minister in the Spirit’s power and under the Spirit’s guidance. Only then will we be truly effective in our ministries.

The second lesson we learn from Peter’s ministry in western Judea is that we are to imitate the ministry of Jesus. Peter’s ministry in the region was in many ways an imitation of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus always ministered in the Spirit’s power and under the Spirit’s guidance. He often healed people through the spoken word. Peter did these same things. In commanding both Aeneas and Tabitha to “get up,” Peter was following the example of Jesus when he commanded the leper to “be clean” (Matt 8:2), or the man with a shriveled hand to “stretch out your hand” (Matt 12:13), or Lazarus to “come out” of the tomb (John 11:43). Like Jesus, Peter also ensured that those he ministered to heard the gospel. As a result, many people turned to the Lord. As ministers of the gospel, we should also seek to imitate the ministry of Jesus, both in word and in action.

A third lesson we learn from this story concerns the twofold purpose of miracles. The first reason God performs miracles is to demonstrate his love for people. Jesus often healed sick people because he had compassion on their suffering. He healed Aeneas because he cared for his suffering, and he raised Tabitha from the dead because he cared for the ones she left behind.

God also performs miracles in order to point people to the Savior. Miracles attract attention and open people’s hearts to the message of Christ’s salvation. We should never take a miracle that God performs and use it to attract attention to ourselves. Rather, we should use it as

an opportunity to point people to Jesus. He is the only one who can save them and meet their deepest spiritual needs.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us that we should pattern our ministries on the ministry of Jesus.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that we should always seek to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, and we should seek the Spirit's guidance in all we do.

Let's **review** some of the significant things we have learned from studying the story of Peter's ministry in Judea.

1. What important ministry lesson do we learn from Peter's ministry in Judea?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you said that we should always seek to follow the Spirit's guidance and minister in the Spirit's power, you answered correctly.
2. To whom should we look as a pattern for our ministries?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you said, "we should always look to Jesus as a pattern for our ministries," you are right.
3. What is the twofold purpose of miracles?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the twofold purpose of miracles is to demonstrate the love of God and to point people to the Savior, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it over and over until you can tell the story of Peter's ministry in western Judea and teach its lessons to others. Then, preach or teach a message on the importance of following the Spirit's guidance in ministry, even when it may not make sense to our human minds.