

## INDUCTIVE LESSON NINE

### THE PERISHING OF PREJUDICE

When scientists completed the Genome Project, mapping all the genes found in humans, it is surprising that they did not find the location of a gene which controlled the trait for prejudice. Prejudice, or an often irrational dislike or distrust of another group unlike ourselves, seems to be hard wired into the genetic make-up of mankind. Prejudice is often expressed against cultural, ethnic, religious, or socio-economic groups very dissimilar to ourselves. But in the absence of any major differences, prejudice humans seem to have the need to feel superior to other groups no matter how small the difference between them exists. Most of us would be hard pressed to differentiate between a Swede and a Norwegian, but when a foreign exchange student, a national junior high jump champion, joined my track team I learned that these minor differences formed the basis for national prejudice between these two groups. Upon learning that my mother was the daughter of Norwegian immigrants, the student asked me, "What does it take to be a Norwegian brain surgeon?" When I couldn't answer he told me, "An 'A' in wood shop." As silly as this seems, it gives evidence that prejudice seems to be ingrained in our fleshly nature. The minor prejudice expressed between these groups of Scandinavians pales in comparison to the racial hatred between Jews and Gentiles. To the Greeks the Jews were barbarians (the term mocked the sound of the Hebrew language). To the Jews the Gentiles in general were fuel for the fires of hell, but the animosity was most intense against the Romans who occupied their land, and the Greeks who had defiled their temple in an attempt to Hellenize the Jews. Only slightly less grievous to the Jews were the Samaritans whom they viewed as apostate half-breeds who had fallen from God's favor and had no place as God's chosen people. The possibility that God could extend his gracious salvation to the Samaritans and the Gentiles was almost more than a good Jewish boy like Peter could endure.

Peter was shocked when in Acts 9 God bestowed the Holy Spirit upon Samaritans, but as we will learn in this study something even more radical would occur. The surety of God's salvation even unto the Gentiles was proven when they were sealed with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit just as Peter had been on the Day of Pentecost. Peter was about to learn that the ground at the foot of the cross is completely level, or as Paul would later write in Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28—see also Colossians 3:11).

Peter learned that God's gracious offer of salvation truly is universal. This is not universal salvation (Unitarian Universalists or *All Dogs Go To Heaven* Theology) but as Paul later clarifies, an offer of salvation for all who accept Jesus as Savior—"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" Romans 10:13 (NIV). The Gospel should act as a bridge not a barrier between diverse groups of people. Indeed, when Jesus gave the great commission in Matthew 28:19, He instructed us to go and make disciples of all nations. It is interesting that the Greek word for

nations is *ethnos* from which we get our word ethnic.

Does prejudice still exist in today's church? The answer in some cases unfortunately, is yes. A generation ago a small fledgling church in Costa Mesa, California stood at a crossroads. The veteran pastor had begun to minister to young members of the counter culture known as hippies. As these often wayward youths began to attend the church, the eldership became concerned because these young people with bare feet, long hair, and often un-washed, would soil the pews and the newly installed plush carpet. In response to the 'hippie invasion' the elders installed signs announcing "No Bare Feet". The pastor informed the church board he would take the signs down and, if necessary, pull up the carpet and preach on concrete floors rather than turn away these 'hippies'. Because of Chuck Smith's refusal to allow prejudice to exclude anyone from the gospel, Calvary Chapel, with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, sparked a revival known as the Jesus Movement of the early 1970's. Not surprisingly, the Maranatha Praise Band from the same era wrote the following worship song, "By His love, let the walls fall down.

One by one, we're drawn together  
One by one, to Jesus' side  
One in Him, we'll live forever  
Strangers He has reconciled.  
In His love, no walls between us  
In His love a common ground  
Kneeling at the cross of Jesus  
All our pride comes tumbling down"<sup>2</sup>

In a similar fashion, one of the blessings in participating in small group Bible Studies is to witness the seamless fellowship that exists within an often diverse group of believers when they are united in the study of God's Word.

<sup>1</sup>Chuck Smith and Tal Brooke, *Harvest* (New Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1987), 49

<sup>2</sup><http://www.releaselyrics.com/f109/maranatha!-praise-band-let-the-walls-fall-down/>

### **Prayer**

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh insights and wisdom in understanding it. Then read through the entire passage two or three times.

### **Memory Verse**

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28 NKJV

### **Study Text / Worksheet**

Write down your observations, comments, or questions directly on the text as you go over it.

## The Visions Of Cornelius And Peter

Acts 10: 1–16

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" 4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. 6 He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." 7 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. 8 So when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." 15 And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

My Observations

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Digging Deeper

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Interpretation:

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Application:

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### **Peter Goes To Caesarea**

Acts 10:17–33

17 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. 18 And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. 19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. 20 Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." 21 Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." 23 Then he invited them in and lodged *them*. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. 28 Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what

reason have you sent for me?" 30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' 33 So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

My Observations

Digging Deeper

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Interpretation:

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**The Gospel Proclaimed And Accepted**

Acts 10:34-48

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. 36 The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— 37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which He

did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. 40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. 43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 47 “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

My Observations

Digging Deeper

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Interpretation:

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Application:

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**Take Away / Summary**

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did on Tuesday, you would tell them you went to a Bible study. The next question would likely be, “What did you

learn?" We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences and easily convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills to give a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in an additional sentence or two, describe what impact this passage will have on how you live.

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### Memory Verse

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 3:28 NKJV

### Key Words/Phrases

Write out the definition of these key words. You can use a regular dictionary or go to one of the Greek sources listed in the Tool Box at the end of the study. You may also use a concordance to see where else and how the word is used in the Bible. *How would these phrases instruct or encourage us today?*

A Memorial Before God (Acts 10:4)

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Fears God (Acts 10:22)

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### Tool Box

**Step 1: The Bible.** Read the passage in a couple of different versions. If you are having trouble understanding a passage, choose a more dynamic version such as *New Living Translation* or *The Message*). To focus in on the exact meaning of a verse, choose a more literal translation such as *New American Standard Bible* or *New King James Version*.

**Step 2: Study Tools.** Use these to help you dig deeper. Background Information: 1) Unger's Bible Dictionary 2) Bible Dictionaries online at biblestudytools.com and blueletterbible.com. Word Studies: 1) Zondhiates' *The Complete Word Study New Testament* 2) Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary* 3) Strong's *Dictionary of Bible Words*.

**Step 3: Commentaries.** Commentaries should not be used in place of studying God's Word directly, but they can give you additional insights. Some good commentaries include: John MacArthur, J. Vernon McGee, *The Expositors Commentary*, NIV Application Commentary, William Barclay (great for background and culture but be careful of his spiritual applications).



# PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF JESUS

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## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS



	Jesus Ascension
	Pentecost---Baptism of Spirit 3,000 saved
	Peter Heals Beggar 5,000 saved
	Peter and John Before Sanhedrin
	Ananias and <u>Sapphira</u>
	Peter and John Before Sanhedrin Again
	Seven Chosen for Ministry
	Stephen's Speech and Martyrdom
	Philip Ministry in Samaria
	Saul's Conversion
<b>This-&gt; Week</b>	Peter's Ministry Along Coast
	'Christian' Church in Antioch
	Herod's Persecution of Church
	Paul's First Missionary Journey
	Jerusalem Conference
	Paul's Second Missionary Journey
	Paul's Third Missionary Journey
	Paul's Arrest and Jerusalem Imprisonment
	Paul's Trials in Caesarea
	Paul's Voyage to Rome
	Paul's Roman House Arrest





