

28a ACTS

This is January the 23rd, 2004. We resume our study in the Book of Acts tonight in both Chapter 9 and Chapter 11. As we prepare to do so, let's take a moment at the outset to go before the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the many ways that you bless us and provide for us, protect us, and arrange the events and the circumstances of our lives to suit your perfect purpose. And the calling that you have issued to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that we are alive in Him, that He is our righteousness and our peace and our sanctification.

And that because of His work and His love and self-sacrifice, we are able to represent ourselves before your throne. We thank you for your word and for its preservation, for the ease of access and the ease of study that we have in our day of technology and of proliferation of translation and all of the helps that go with study and understanding. We pray tonight as we seek to gain more knowledge of our Savior that God the Holy Spirit will find our hearts ready and will minister these truths to our souls.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Last week, we took a giant step backward to chapter nine because we went back to visit again the healing in Joppa accomplished through Peter for Aeneas.

What I found intriguing there was the language. This was actually at Lydda in the region of Joppa. It's nearby in the Sharon Valley there, the Sharon Plain slopes down to the sea.

And so we went back and revisited that, and then I promised that we would move smartly forward. However, this Aeneas story just keeps drawing my attention. And so I want to offer you one other thought from this.

It's these little stories that get overlooked. It's the little three and four verse things that a lot of times are very key. And I think you'll be surprised by the time we finish tonight at this.

One of the things that we almost always do. What do we always do when we encounter a biblical figure and we see their name? What do we do? We figure out what their name means. Right.

We go back to its sources. Did I give you a meaning for Aeneas or an origination of that name? This is that little loose end. Sometimes I feel like Columbo.

There's something that just doesn't quite fit and it nags at me. And initially, when I went back, all of the references just say Aeneas. It's just a name.

And they did not give a derivation. They didn't say where it came from. Well, it was

nagging at me and it kept creeping up over the horizon of the back end of my brain.

So this week I went back and I tracked it down. And I find this to be very fascinating because if you go to a good encyclopedia and look up Aeneas, you find that this man was named for a very famous figure in Roman and Greek mythology. He is the ancestor.

He is the forerunner of Romulus and Remus. The mother of Romulus and Remus is descended from Aeneas. Probably the thing you would remember the most is the very famous piece of ancient literature called the Aeneid by Homer.

Well, that's where it gets its name. It's all about Aeneas and his exploits. Let me give you a few facts.

Just as background, Aeneas was a Trojan hero. He was from Troy. He was the son of Anchises and Aphrodite.

And he was the father of Ascanius with Crusa. And he was one of the most important figures in Greek and Roman legendary history. This would be like mentioning Christopher Columbus in our culture.

He was just that well known. Hector was the other famous Trojan. You know, my dad, whenever he wants to specify a long period of time, he'll say, well, that's been going on ever since Hector was a pup.

And people say, well, who's Hector? Well, Hector was the guy back in the Trojan War. So when he was a youth, that's a way long time ago. He was kind of a Hercules figure in the sense that whenever he would get in trouble, the gods would come down and try to pull his bacon out of the fire and so forth.

After Troy was defeated, the famous Trojan horse, ploy and all the rest of that, he stuck around and basically founded a new kingdom sort of out of the ashes of what was left of Troy. He was almost killed in the Trojan War in a big battle there. But Aphrodite, his mother, saved him.

He was wounded. His mother was trying to carry him away. Aphrodite was trying to carry him off to Mount Olympus, but she in turn was wounded and dropped him.

Then Apollo sent a cloud down and enveloped him. And he had kind of a cloud chariot type of thing that took him to Pergamos, which was a sacred spot there in Troy. And Artemis came down and healed him.

He'd go on and on. This is like days of our lives or something. You need a soap opera digest to try to follow all of these mythological details.

But here's the thing. This Aeneas is a big deal in ancient Greek and Roman mythology. And he comes to be sort of a demigod.

You know, his mother is a goddess, Aphrodite. So that makes him one of the pantheon of gods or demigods, half gods, that they made much of. So what kind of a god is he? All of the different deities, everybody knows that Bacchus is the god of wine and Aphrodite is the goddess of love.

And you've got Mars, the god of war. And all of these gods and goddesses had sort of a thing. They had a hobby, something that they were known for.

And this characterizes them. Diana of the Ephesians, we studied her back when. All of them would have a thing.

So Aeneas, as a god and as the hero of the Aeneid and all of these other mythological things, guess what kind of god he is? He's not a party god. He's not a war god. He's not a water and storm guy.

He's not Thor with the hammer or anything. He, of all things, is a life, death and rebirth deity. This is what he is known for.

Now, as long as we're on this subject, let me just give you a little bit on life, death, rebirth deities, because this is not just a one time shot with Aeneas. These go all through the mythological world, across cultures, across history, across time and countries and empires and so on. In mythology, a life, death, rebirth deity, also known as a dying and rising god, dies and is reborn.

That's sort of the Phoenix type of theme in either a literal or symbolic sense. Sometimes it's basically they just go to Hades, they go to the underworld and come back. And this is symbolic of death and coming back to life.

They would also get wrapped up in the crop cycle and be worshipped in connection with crops because your crops are fruitful and grow and produce a harvest and then they die. And then they are sown and they sort of are reborn every year. So a lot of times the death and rebirth deities got associated with fertility and with crops and that.

Now, you have in a lot of different cultures, for example, in Egyptian pantheon, you have Osiris and his consort Isis. And Osiris is a life and death god and the rising and falling of the Nile is associated with this cycle. In Greek mythology, you have Adonis, Sibyl, Dionysus, Orpheus, Persephone.

They've got a god for every occasion. You could practically have one for every day of the month or day of the year. It just goes on and on.

Over in the Hindu mythology, that Hindu is some weird beliefs. And you hear and see little echoes, even in India, of truth. Did you know that the Indians in their whole Vishnu, Rama, Brahma business, they basically have a triune god.

They have a tripartite deity center. And then when one of these three, the Brahma hardly ever shows up, if ever. Some of them think he never has showed up.

He's kind of like God the Father, not ever manifest. Vishnu is the one that keeps popping up hither and yon. And then they have some other one.

Rama, I think, is the other one. So whenever Vishnu shows up in the flesh, they call it an avatar. You take the invisible deity and show up in the flesh.

They think that there's been like nine or ten times in history where Vishnu has showed up in the flesh. He was a crocodile one time. He was a frog one time.

Interestingly, though, I think the fourth time around, he was a lion man. Now, when Jesus came to earth, he is the lion of the tribe of Judah. But in Indian mythology, they just take this and twist it around.

In Persian mythology, Mithras is the same type of life and death deity. In Roman theology, mythology rather, you have Aeneas, also Bacchus, the god of wine, is a life and death type of thing. And in Buddhism, you have some of these same concepts as well.

I won't go into some of that. But as long as I'm two steps removed from my subject, let me just give you a little bit on avatars. The Trimurti is the name of their god, Trimurti.

And you get the idea from Tri that there's three people in it. There's Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. So it's not Ram, it's Shiva is the other one.

Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma are the three aspects. And they think, see, this is the link between Indian religion and Buddhism, because they think that the Buddha was an avatar. And so he's a avatar of Vishnu.

And so that's where you get the whole Buddhist thing. The first one was Matsya, the fish. The second one is Karma, the tortoise, then Varaha, the boar.

And then the fourth one is Narasimha, Simha, Simba, the lion. This is the man-lion. Nara is man, Simha is lion in the language they speak over there.

Then Vamana, the dwarf, Parashurama, Rama and Krishna is the eighth avatar. Krishna means dark or black. And when you get all this Hare Krishna business, he's the eighth avatar.

And his whole little following is where that comes from. A lot of them differ. They can't make up their minds who the ninth avatar was.

Some of them think it was Gautama Buddha. And that's where you get Buddhism. Some of them think it was somebody else.

Then they think there is a future Buddha. And some Buddhists believe that Jesus is the future Buddha. Some Indians and Hindu people think that Jesus is another of the avatars.

The Muslims think that Jesus was one of the prophets. Islam considers him to be a prophet. But Jesus is listed when you go to people who just study mythology and believe nothing.

Jesus is also listed amongst the death and resurrection gods. Well, we're looking at Rome. We're looking at the Greek culture in the Roman Empire in the time of just after the cross.

And Aeneas has been named for this life and death deity in the Roman pantheon. Did I lose anybody? Is everybody nobody fell off the back of the truck there? All right. So when Peter comes to Lydda and he meets this man who is paralyzed for eight years.

Paralysis being a figure for death, as we've already seen. And with this background, what happens next? While Peter is still at Lydda, what takes place in chapter 9, verse 36 of Acts? It's always refreshing to go back to the word of God after looking at weird pagan stuff. Verse 36 in Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha.

You have Dorcas, the lady who was abounding in deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did. You think, well, was she Mrs. Crock? Did she leave one and a half billion to the Salvation Army? Or what exactly did she do? You know what she did? She made clothes. She ran her little needle and thread and got cloth from various places.

And she made garments for the poor, for the widows and people that they didn't have goodwill in those days. And so people that needed clothes for cheap or no money at all would go to Tabitha and she would find maybe some cast off raiment from the rich who spilled a little wine on it somewhere and said, well, I can't wear this anymore. And here's this wonderful fabric.

And she would take it, recycle it, make clothing out of it for other people. She did this for years. Well, if you just step back and look at this disciple named Tabitha.

She's a Jewish lady, right? Aeneas, we don't know what he is, but his name is very Greek and very Roman, isn't it? So, and we saw that Tabitha is just one letter off from Talitha, little girl, which is what Jesus said. And Peter says the same thing. Well, when you go back to the story of little girl, I say to you, arise.

Do you remember the sequence that took place in that story? Do you remember that Jesus was on the way to heal that little girl and he got interrupted, didn't he? Jairus, ruler of the synagogue, had his little daughter, pastor, come quickly. My daughter is at death's door. He's trying to get there.

But then there's a holdup. What was the what was the cause of this delay? Woman with

the issue of blood touching the hem of the garment, one of the most famous miracles in the Bible. She comes up from behind and Jesus says, I perceive that virtue has gone out of me.

Here's this lady who had the issue of blood for how long? Twelve years, twelve number associated with Israel. And when we studied that back when we saw this wonderful shadowing of what God is doing in history, where you have Jairus representing Israel, representing the Israelites, needing their redemption, their life and their future is at death's door. Jesus is on the way to deliver them.

He is, after all, the Messiah, the Mashiach for Israel, right? But before the deliverance can be complete, something is interposed. And it's this woman that has had the issue of blood. And she is a Syrophenician.

She has she is the woman comes in. Is she the Syrophenician woman? Have I lost a brain cell? At any rate, she is interposed. And so in this story of Jairus and his daughter, you have this other thing in set.

And in the meantime, while this is taking place, the little girl dies and it appears that all hope for Jairus is over. But then Jesus comes to the upper room and raises her. We studied that as a foreshadowing of the end of the age of Israel with seven years left to run.

The inserting of the church age represented by the woman with the issue of blood. Her need is great. And she comes up and touches Jesus.

And so that interrupts. And then the going up to the upper room and raising the daughter is like the Lord Jesus coming at the second coming for Israel and raising them up. Little girl, I say to you, arise.

So the point here is there is a similar shadowing going on in Acts because Aeneas and we're we're missing the front part of it. But Aeneas is the Gentile world. And his death is going to be remedied before Tabitha's death.

There's a reason why these stories are told in this order. Aeneas, Greek, Roman, God of life, death and resurrection. Is paralyzed, he is helpless, he is in a living death and Jesus raises him first.

Then through Peter, then you have Tabitha being raised through the name of Christ in Peter's presence. And it is tied together by that phraseology and by the similarity of circumstances. So in both cases, we have a distinction.

I think the Bible teaches there are people who say there's just no difference between the rapture and the second coming. There's one general resurrection. Jesus is going to come back.

They don't believe in the seven year tribulation. They don't believe that we are gone for that. They think that we're going to stay.

Antichrist is going to come. We will go through the tribulation as the church, be the 144,000 witnesses. Israel is going to wake up and then Jesus is going to come back.

And there's just one coming. And they say, now you show me where the Bible distinguishes between the second coming and the rapture. They say it's all the same thing.

Well, there are if this should ever come up or if you are ever thrown into doubt that you're going to have to go through the tribulation. I don't have time to give you chapter and verse, but just remember two things. First of all, remember this pattern.

More than once in scripture, we are given the Gentile salvation and the Gentile resurrection before a Jewish salvation and a Jewish resurrection. You have it with the woman in the issue of blood and Jairus and his daughter. You have it here again in Acts chapter nine.

It is not an accident. None of these things are here by accident. People think that there's just sort of a rambling telling of whatever stories Luke could collect.

And it's just sort of we just want to kind of tell you what happened. God, the Holy Spirit, superintended this writing and everything is there for a reason. Every detail counts.

Every word is inspired by God. Every word is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction and righteousness so that we can be complete, so that we can be thoroughly furnished for every good work. It is important for us to understand the times and the seasons and understand what our agenda is, what our schedule is.

We are here not much longer. I personally think that most of us will be alive at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for the rapture, the return in the air. The second thing I told you, there's two things to remember in regard to the difference between the rapture and the second coming.

One is there are scriptures that talk about this. You can add to that Revelation chapter four and verse one, where John representing the church, the voice from heaven says, come up here and I will show you what will take place after. John ascends from Patmos to heaven in the spirit and then sees all of the events of Revelation, all of these seven year events unfold.

That seems to clearly suggest that the perspective for those in the church is like the perspective of John. We're here on earth, Revelation chapter two and three and then at four, one, we go up and we see all of this from a heavenly point of view. Also, when you see the descriptions of the rapture, what does Paul say? Shout, voice of the archangel,

the trump of God, the dead in Christ rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord. Where? In the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Jesus coming at the rapture to collect his bride is in the air. None of the accounts of the rapture talk about Jesus coming down to earth or setting up his kingdom. Paul could easily have said to meet the Lord in the air and we will descend and set up shop in the new Jerusalem to live happily ever after.

He doesn't say that because he knows there's more. The second coming is always to earth, whether you see it in Isaiah, whether you see it in Revelation. In Revelation, the Lord Jesus comes down and will plant his feet on the Mount of Olives.

Behold, he cometh with clouds. He descends, his feet touch the earth, the thing splits, a way of escape is made, Armageddon is resolved, blood is high as the horse's bridle, seven months to bury the dead and so on. Entirely different to meet the Lord in the air.

And the final passage I'll give you in that regard is Paul in Thessalonians when he says that day will not come. He says there are those who write a letter purporting to be from me saying that the day of the Lord has come and the man of sin is revealed and the Antichrist is coming. They thought the Roman Emperor was the Antichrist.

They thought Nero was the Antichrist. And Paul says, no, don't you remember when I was with you, I told you these things. That day can't come unless there comes first the apostasia.

Stasis means to stand. If you put something in stasis, it stands still. Apo means away.

Apostasia, which comes into English as apostasy, literally means to stand away. When you're talking about spiritual truth, apostasy is to not stand for the faith, to not stand for the truth. You stand over here in the middle of something else.

You stand in the way of sinners. But in that context, Paul says that day will not come except there comes first the standing away. Believers on this earth will stand away.

Apo means from, means away from. How do you describe the rapture? We lose gravity. We go up.

We stand away. It is not. Everyone is expecting a worldwide apostasy right before the tribulation that there just won't hardly be any Christianity, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense because the rapture would be a pretty inglorious thing at that point because there's like 12 people coming up.

Jesus comes up. Okay, get in the back. There's room.

Buckle your seatbelts. We're just taking the minivan, not hardly anybody to pick up. That's not the case.

It is every believer on the face of the earth at that moment is going to ascend, chasing after all of the dead in Christ from the centuries. So all of that combined together, I could go on for hours. But this is the idea of life, death, resurrection.

Aeneas' name is no accident. How many times in the Bible does it just say a blind man or a beggar or a lame guy? It gives us his name. Why? His name means something.

You look his name up. You find out he's the biggest guy in Roman mythology dealing with life, death and the afterlife. And he's paralyzed laying there dead and he can't raise himself.

His name's Aeneas. Why doesn't he just call on Aphrodite or raise himself up or something? Let a cloud from Apollo carry him to glory. He can't.

It's the name of Jesus Christ that enables him to do what? To stand. He stands. That's what we're going to do at the rapture.

So I didn't want to go off and leave that part of it unexplored. The sequence there with Aeneas and then Tabitha reflects the same type of thing we saw with Jairus and the woman with the issue of blood. Now, this gives us a chance to go forward at long last into Acts chapter 11.

However, since I have a little bit of a few minutes here, remember the sermon everybody gathered at Cornelius house and heard the sermon? There's one word in that sermon that we've not talked about that we really should. Opening his mouth, this is Acts 10, 34. Peter said, I most certainly understand now, having seen the vision, having had the conversation with Cornelius, that God is not one to show partiality.

Hands up, everybody that enjoys partiality. Somebody overlooking you to pick somebody else for no good reason. We don't like partiality unless it's in our favor.

Right. But when it goes against us, we realize how unfair it really is. God is not one to show partiality.

And in this context, it is he is no longer showing partiality to a single nation. God has stopped being partial to Israel. He reached up and stopped the pendulum on the Israel clock.

And Israel as a nation is no longer an issue. They're only going to be on the planet for about 40 more years. And then they're going to be gone as a nation until our day.

In every nation, the man who fears him and does what right does what is right. Is what? Every nation, whoever fears him and works righteousness is what? What does it say in

your Bible? Verse 35. Accepted.

Accepted. This is a huge concept. Everyone who fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him.

Now, pop quiz for you. Is being accepted a synonym for salvation? Before you commit yourself to an answer, keep in mind that working righteousness is a prerequisite for being accepted. Do you have to work righteousness to receive salvation? This word work righteousness is literally the word for work.

So in every nation, whoever fears God, this is phobeo and ergadzumai. I've told you before that over in the boathouse at Annapolis when I was rowing on crew to find out how much strength you had and how good you were as an oarsman. They had a machine that had a giant 150 pound flywheel with a ratchet mechanism and an oar handle and a seat like you would have in a in a crew shell that goes back and forth on rollers.

And it has a counter like an odometer type of thing that counts the revolutions of this giant flywheel. And then there's a resistance thing like a workout machine would have that is balanced to correspond to your weight. And your weight is in stones because this all comes from England and they, you know, what's a stone, 14 pounds.

So you figure out how many stone you are. If you weigh 140 pounds, that's 10 stone. I was like 12 stone, something like that.

So you put this on here and it basically gives you your body weight resistance. They say start the clock now and you begin to row. And so you row and in a given amount of time, you want to turn that thing as many times as you can.

The name of that machine was an ergometer because it is a machine. It is a device to measure your work output as an oarsman. You can't fool it.

In a boat, you might be able to fool the coach. You might get your oar to look like it's making a big puddle or you might just be going through the motions, but you're not really pulling your weight, as they say. You have to pull your weight, an eighth of the weight of the coxswain and an eighth of the weight of the boat.

Well, ergazomai means to work, and this is to work righteousness, to kayosune. Everyone who fears God, this is respect, reverence, worship, and works righteousness is accepted by him. And the word accepted is dektos, D-E-K-T-O-S.

And it comes from the verb dekomai, which means to receive. What happens when somebody hands you a present with your name on it? You receive it, right? You take it, you accept it, you receive it. It's the same idea.

Remember when the Bible says, behold, now is the accepted time. Now is the day of

salvation. Dektos, the accepted time, when they translate it into Greek, the acceptable year of the Lord, dektos, it is the time to receive.

So this, what is it saying now? In every nation, whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him. What I find fascinating about this is God doesn't seem interested in salvation for its own sake. Most Christians and most churches are mostly interested in getting you to accept the gospel and only very secondarily interested in being acceptable to God.

Well, if we can just get your fire insurance, if you'll just accept Jesus so you don't go to hell, I mean, we'd like you to come to church. We'd like you to live a holy life. But the main thing is we just want you to accept Jesus.

So you don't go to hell, right? But in the Bible, you hardly ever see a verse that you can construe that way. Look at this, fear God. Obviously this is everything that that implies, accepting Christ as savior.

But Peter doesn't even say that. He says in every nation, if you fear God and do what is right, work what is right. You are accepted.

You get the idea that salvation isn't all that good a deal unless you are acceptable. You can be saved and not acceptable. These are the ones who are going to be outside the walls of the New Jerusalem.

These are the ones who are going to be outside in the millennial kingdom of Christ. These are the ones who are going to be in the Protestant purgatory. I don't know if that's I'm going to have to read about that.

But look at what the Bible says, fear him and work righteousness, fear him is not enough to be accepted. Therefore, acceptance is not a synonym for salvation because believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. It doesn't say believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be accepted.

You can be a son, you can have all the rights and privileges thereunto pertaining, but never avail yourself. You remember the prodigal? He was a son, collected his inheritance, went into a far country and being a son didn't do him any good until he returned to the father and was accepted back by the father into the household. He got the slaughtered calf and the ring and the robe and all the rest of it because he came to the father and he acknowledged his transgression and he made peace with his father, was accepted by his father.

Now he enjoys the benefits. He was a son the whole time, never lost his sonship, never lost salvation in that sense. But we want not just to be saved, we want to be acceptable.

How many times does the Bible say you need to persevere so that you will not be

ashamed at his coming? To be accepted means not to be ashamed. It's very embarrassing to show up and get turned away for something, to show up and be rejected. Nobody likes rejection.

Well, what does it mean to be accepted? We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to take a quick look at this concept of acceptability. What does the Bible say about being acceptable? What do we need to know so that we are acceptable? If we die tomorrow or the next day, is that going to be our status? That's what we'll look at when we come back.