

Episode #1152 Acts 10 Part 2-Peter's Vision

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. We read of the first Gentile believer in the Lord Jesus, the centurion Cornelius, in Acts 10. This one of the truly magnificent chapters of the Word of God. We saw last time the devout, godly man Cornelius, visited by an angel of God, and instructed to send men to Peter.

Meanwhile, we see Peter in Joppa has a vision of his own. God is working on both sides to bring them together to carry out His will.

III. The Vision of Peter. Acts 10:9-20.

- A. Acts 10:14. Peter recognizes this voice as coming from the Lord. Even so he is appalled at its message. Peter well knew the law. Leviticus 11:1-8. Only animals that have cloven hooves and chew the cud are permissible to eat. The exception is those who do one or the other, but not both. Also defined is what are clean and unclean animals among fish and water-dwelling animals, among birds or flying animals, and among insects. Peter protests that he has kept the law God gave regarding clean meat since his childhood. Never before has any unclean food touched his lips. How, then, can the Lord now be commanding him to kill and eat? Greek "unclean" is *akathartos*, used of unclean spirits as well.
- B. Verse 15. God's decision rules over all, even over laws that He Himself made in the past. Some people jump in and tell us that God was here declaring all foods to be clean. We must not be guilty of ignoring the context. To declare all foods clean is not the point of this vision.
- C. Verse 16. The vision was repeated three times, giving it the most solemn emphasis. God's decision was final and could not be changed. Then, the vision over, the vessel ascends back into the sky. There are people with x-ray eyes who try to examine this and try to tell us exactly what this meant and that it removed all the dietary laws as far as Israel was concerned. But that is not the truth!
- D. Verse 17. Peter knows that he has been given a message from God, but the meaning is unclear. God had made a decision, one that went against what Peter had formerly thought about things clean and unclean, but what He had cleansed Peter did not yet know. As Peter tries to figure this out, the men who had been sent from Cornelius arrive at the gate to Simon's house. God has worked this all out according to His timing, and His plan, and His design.
- E. Verse 18. The messengers of Cornelius ask if they are at the right place.
- F. Verse 19. The Spirit speaks to Peter again. "The Spirit" in Greek means the Person of the Holy Spirit, not the angel, as Bullinger suggests. Peter did not have to come up with his own interpretation and move on his own volition, but God told him what the vision meant. Some still try to come up with their own interpretation different from the one God gives! This isn't right.
- G. Verse 20. Peter is to go with the men at the gate in spite of any doubts he will have when he sees them. The doubts will come when he sees they are Gentiles, those he would have considered unclean before he saw this vision. But he is to have no doubts nor perplexity. God was sending him, so there was no room for doubt. "Sent" is the

Greek *apostello*, so these men were not just sent with Cornelius' authority, but with God's as well.

IV. Peter Meets Cornelius. Acts 10:21-33.

- A. Verse 21. Peter knows well how to obey. Though the Spirit told Peter they had come and He had sent them, He had not told Peter why He sent them or what they would want. Thus, Peter asks them why it is that they have come?
- B. Verse 22. The three messengers tell of Cornelius, and throw in some good words about him. They felt that they must put this in. He had not been a bitter, vindictive man. He had not hated the captive people he had charge over. They knew the Roman occupiers were not loved by Jews as a rule. The Jews hated polytheism, and Cornelius was a monotheist. He was just, unlike many of the occupying Romans. A good reputation with the Jews was also unusual for a Roman. Then they tell of his vision. "Summon" is *pempo*, a simple sending to get Peter. It is up to Peter to respond. He knows God's instructions, and like an obedient servant will carry them out. "Nation" of the Jews is *ethnous*, often translated "Gentile." But how silly "the Gentile of the Jews" would be! They did not have a pet Gentile. The translators were forced to translate this right here. Israel was a nation like any other. This word should always be translated as "nation," not as "Gentile."
- C. Verse 23. Peter must have been surprised to see that the men God had sent were Romans, yet he obeyed the instructions given by the Holy Spirit, considering well the lesson of the vision he had received. An Israelite would never lodge a Gentile. Because they did not keep clean and unclean laws, they might become unclean and never know it, and would never do the ritual to cleanse themselves if they did. They could make anyone or anything they touched unclean. Plus, the Romans were occupiers, hated by most Jews. To invite someone into your home indicated the closest possible kinship and fellowship. Luke 7:6. Yet Peter did not hesitate to obey God. Many accuse Peter in this story of prejudice and lack of faithfulness to the Lord's commands. The exact opposite is true. He was willing to forego every social stigma and risk severe censure and rejection at the hand of his fellow Jews in order to obey the orders he was given. He does not go alone, however. Certain brothers (six) accompany him. They can not only serve him, but also to be witnesses as to his conduct, and prove that they, too, are willing to follow God wherever He leads, no matter what radical actions that might require.
- D. Verse 24. Cornelius had gathered a large company, probably people he knew were interested in the true God. Perhaps he was partially responsible for this with some of them.
- E. Verse 25. Cornelius gave Peter the same status as we would give Jesus Christ. He probably tried to guess who God would be sending to him in this miraculous way, and had concluded it must be God in human form. He had the right idea, though he had the wrong man. There is a Man Who is God in human form, but He is not the one who was standing before Cornelius now. Peter only represented him. He will straighten Cornelius out.
- F. Verse 26. Peter straightens Cornelius out. No man should take the glory that belongs to God alone! A good lesson that all popes and all other men could learn. Yet when men offered Jesus Christ worship, He never stopped them from doing so or straightened them out. Matthew 2:11, 8:2, 9:18, 14:33, 15:25, 20:20, 28:9; Mark 5:6;

Luke 24:52; and John 9:38, the same Greek word *proskuneo* is used as is used here.

This is clear evidence that the Lord Jesus was God, and deserved worship as God.

V. Conclusion: Peter comes to Cornelius' household by God's direction after receiving His instructions to do so. He does not know why he was sent for. When Cornelius tries to worship him as God, Peter refuses to allow it. Yet Jesus Christ always allowed those who chose to worship Him. This shows us that Jesus Christ is far more than Peter was: Jesus Christ is God. Do you believe it? Do you offer Jesus Christ the worship He deserves?