

What God Has Made Clean (Acts 10:11-11:18)

Chapters 9-11 tell us about how God has reminded and taught the apostles about his heart for the nations— that his kingdom is made up of people from every tribe and tongue. Even as Peter is faithfully preaching the gospel and healing people, he doesn't fully understand the scope of God's kingdom.

1. Who Can Get in on the Salvation of Jesus.

A. Peter needs to see and understand.

1. It hasn't become clear to him yet. It's going to require a supernatural revelation for Peter to receive it.

2. Caesarea is about 33 miles up the coast from Joppa, where Peter is staying.

3. Cornelius is a commander of a cohort of one hundred Roman soldiers. He "fears God." He belongs to a special category of non-Jews who believed in Israel's God and went to synagogue but had not become full converts to Judaism. To become a full-convert to Judaism, he would have had to be circumcised. Because he is not, the Jews would have considered him unclean.

4. He may be honorable, generous, and prayerful, but in Jewish eyes, he is unclean.

B. An angel appearing to a God-fearing Gentile.

1. This must have meant a lot to Cornelius.

2. But it seems something is missing from his life. He is sincere, but he is not saved.

C. Peter also receives a vision.

1. He's gone to the housetop to pray and he is hungry. Peter fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened, a great sheet descending with all kinds of animals, reptiles and birds of the air.

2. Peter has never been able to simply eat whatever he wants when he gets hungry. Whole categories of food have been off limits based on Levitical food laws (Lev. 11). (No camel jerky. No rock badger burgers. No bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches. No shrimp cocktail).

3. Peter needs to understand that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus made Levitical food laws obsolete. The blood of Jesus provides true cleansing for all people.

Mark 7:15 "there is nothing outside the person which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which come out of the person are what defile the person."

Acts 10:15-16 "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." 16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky."

D. Three men are looking for you. (19-20)

1. Go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them. The men told Peter that Cornelius had a vision as well and the angel told him to send for Peter. (10:22)

2. This was new territory for Peter. He didn't just go to the homes of Gentiles to visit. But he went Caesarea, taking some friends along. (Acts 10:28-29)

2. A deeper understanding.
 - A. God is revealing to Peter that Gentiles are no longer to be considered unclean.
 1. This is a picture of how the gospel reaches deep into hearts changing people. Peter is understanding that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (34-43)
 2. Essentially Peter delivers the same gospel message to the Gentiles that he gave to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost. He tells them about 1) the righteous life of Jesus; 2) his atoning death; 3) his victorious resurrection; 4) his present reign; 5) his future return as judge of the living and the dead.
 - B. The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. (44-48)
 1. These Gentile believers experienced the same baptism of the Holy Spirit and water baptism that the Jewish believers experienced at Pentecost. By faith in Jesus, Jews and Gentiles can now call each other “brothers and sisters.”
 2. Cornelius had always been on the fringes. Now he is welcomed in, forgiven, filled with the Holy Spirit, growing in the knowledge of Jesus; walking in grace.
3. Back in Jerusalem questions are being asked.
 - A. The believers have heard the Gentiles received Christ. (11:1-4)
 1. They criticized Peter accusing him of eating with “uncircumcised” men. Peter tells them of the vision he received and the vision of Cornelius (11:13-14). He told them about the Holy Spirit “falling” upon the Gentiles. (15-17)
 2. Was Peter worried about the response of the Jerusalem brothers?
 - B. They glorified God.
 1. When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God (18).
 2. What we are reading impacted the first century Gentiles, but it also impacts you and me today. God has granted repentance that leads to life—even to you and me!
 3. This repentance that leads to life isn’t simply something we look back on as a one-time experience. It’s an ongoing posture as the Spirit works in us revealing our sin to us. As we walk with him he convicts us and continues to show us our need to repent.
 - C. What is God showing you? Is there something in you that you need to bring to him in repentance? Maybe it’s an attitude! Maybe it’s an ongoing struggle with sin!
 1. We have his word before us! We have his Spirit in us! We can approach him in prayer, confessing our sin; admitting we are unclean!
 2. We can pray asking God to show us the reality of our own hearts. We can ask him to save us from our pride and exclusivity. “Lord, may the generosity of your grace toward me make me generous in sharing that grace with everyone you put in front of me.”

Live each day repenting and rejoicing!