

▼ **Non-Jews Welcome - Part 5**

Rocklyn Clarke Sr. - Sunday November 1, 2020

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• **Read the Passage: Acts 11:1-18**

The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

“I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

“The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

“Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?”

When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”

• **Read the Passage: Acts 11:19-30**

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

▼ **Sermon's Purpose (what listeners should do)**

- Understand repentance in Acts 2 and how we got here from there.
- Understand that the gospel is never proclaimed as a way to go to heaven.
- Understand the steps leading up to the gospel presentation.
- Understand how the gospel is presented in this passage.
- Understand how this advances God's agenda.
- Learn how the church handled fresh revelation.
- Learn about the next phase of gentiles entering the church.

▼ **Understand repentance in Acts 2 and how we got here from there.**

- Change your mind about Jesus. Subway train: doctor, police officer, misbehaving youth.
- Faith - Niagara Falls wheelbarrow illustration.
- God directs Peter to preach the gospel to the non-Jewish soldier Cornelius and his family and friends and then fills them with the Holy Spirit.
- Yes - it explains why the Jerusalem church began accepting as valid the conversion of non-Jews.
- The church successfully expanded beyond its Jewish borders.

▼ **Understand that the gospel is never proclaimed as a way to go to heaven.**

- Acts 2:29-47
- Acts 3:11-26
- Acts 4:8-13
- Acts 5:27-32
- Acts 7
- Philippians 3:17-21
- God's agenda: To bring everything in heaven and earth under Christ (Ephesians 1:1-10).

▼ **Understand the steps leading up to the gospel presentation.**

- Note that Cornelius is a god-fearer: a gentile who looks to Jews rather than to his own pagan culture for spiritual guidance. He is, in other words, friendly to the synagogue. This will not necessarily be true of future gentile converts.

▼ **God sends an angel to tell Cornelius to send for Peter.**

- What do angels look like? Notice how Cornelius describes the angel in Acts 10:30.
- Angels are not authorized to present the gospel - that job belongs to human beings.

- The angel didn't tell Cornelius that he was doing pretty well and should pursue salvation through his own culture.
- The angel didn't tell Cornelius that he should just continue being a god-fearer and giving alms to the poor.
- ▼ Notice the "coincidence"!
 - God set up Cornelius' and Peter's schedules.
 - God is the master of timing - rely on this!
 - God has some timed encounters arranged for you too!
 - Peter is not to call unclean what God has made clean. Does this make all foods clean? Note Mark 7:1-23.
 - Cornelius is a "man of peace" (Matthew 10:1-16; Luke 10:1-12). Try to connect with what God is already doing!
 - Jesus is the authoritative revealer of God the Father (Matthew 11:25-30).
- ▼ **Understand how the gospel is presented in this passage.**
 - ▼ What do angel's look like?
 - How does Luke (the author of Acts) describe the visitor who appeared to Cornelius?
 - How do Cornelius' emissaries describe the visitor who appeared to Cornelius?
 - How does Cornelius describe the visitor who appeared to him?
 - Notice what Peter does and doesn't say.
 - ▼ Peter doesn't say:
 - I don't want to impose my religious views on you.
 - I don't want to impose my cultural views on you.
 - We have so many hypocrites among our people (e.g. Pharisees, Saducees, etc.) that I don't feel it's appropriate for me to say anything to you until we have a better track record.
 - ▼ Peter does say:
 - ▼ "God accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what's right."
 - What does "what's right" mean?
 - ▼ Peter assumes that Cornelius knows the message God sent to the people of Israel - the basic story of Jesus.
 - Good news of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all.
 - Why does he assume this?
 - Can we always assume this?
 - ▼ Peter reviews Jesus' anointed ministry, death by crucifixion, burial, resurrection.

- After John's baptism, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power.
- He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil because God was with him.
- The Jews killed him on the cross.
- God raised him from the dead on the third day.
- Peter is a witness who has been commanded to preach the story.
- Jesus has been appointed judge of the living and dead.
- ▼ Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.
 - What does "believes in him" mean?
 - What does "forgiveness of sins" mean to the audience? Jeremiah 31:31-37; 2 Chronicles 34:14-28; Ezra 9; Nehemiah 1; Acts 1:1-11
- Peter gives orders for them to be baptized.
- ▼ **Understand how this advances God's agenda.**
 - ▼ God chose someone who would take his instructions seriously:
 - Note that Cornelius sent 2 servants along with a devout soldier to find Peter.
 - Note that Cornelius gathered his relatives and close friends.
 - God prepared Peter to move outside of his comfort zone.
 - Prior to ascending to the Father, Jesus told his disciples that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. - Acts 1:8
- ▼ **Learn how the church handled this fresh revelation.**
 - ▼ The Jerusalem church expresses its concerns about Peter's engagement with gentiles.
 - Note their concern about Peter having eaten with the Gentiles.
 - This casts our observations about the sheet full of animals in a different light. Peter understood the vision to be a reference to welcoming gentiles, but eating with them is an obvious component of their interaction.
 - Thus, Peter's vision does probably imply that Jewish food restrictions can be ignored at least when proclaiming the gospel to gentiles. Note - there are other passages that make this case more clearly.
 - Note that the church doesn't appear to be intimidated about confronting Peter.
 - Note that Peter responds calmly without appealing to his status as an apostle.
- ▼ **Learn about the next phase of gentiles entering the church.**

- ▼ Some of the scattered Jews share the gospel with Greeks.
 - ▼ How do we think about evangelism?
 - Should people from other religions or people with no religion be told that they need to follow Jesus? Why or why not?
 - Does your answer to the previous question agree with what this passage teaches? Discuss.
 - This results in a community of believers that includes Jews and Gentiles.
- ▼ The mother church gets wind of this and, likely as a result of the recent experience with Peter, they prepare to work with this new development. The new community will need guidance, so they send Barnabus (“Son of Encouragement”).
 - Communities of believers need shepherds. - Matthew 9:35-38.
 - You might not be called to be the shepherd, but you should know that a community needs a shepherd.
- ▼ Barnabus drafts Paul - presumably as an apprentice.
 - Barnabus doesn’t do the work alone. He finds a disciple.
 - You need to have a discipleship mindset.
- ▼ This is the context in which the term “Christians” was born! It seems to have been used by outsiders.
 - There are many equivalent terms for believers: saved, born again, Christian, disciples, etc.
- ▼ The new community responds to a crisis/opportunity.
 - ▼ Prophets predict a famine.
 - The Holy Spirit still calls people to be prophets (Ephesians 4:1-13).
 - Prophets sometimes predict events (foretelling vs. forth telling).
 - The Antioch community demonstrates their family connection to the Jerusalem church by arranging to help meet their impending need.

▶ **Make Disciples!**

▶ **Conclusion**

▼ **Followup**

• **Q&A**

▼ **Discussion Questions (from last month)**

- Should people from other religions or people with no religion be told that they need to follow Jesus? Why or why not?
- Does your answer to the previous question agree with what this passage teaches? Discuss.
- Which character in this story do you identify with the most? Why?
- Which character in this story do you identify with the least? Why?
- What recent experiences have you had with evangelism?
- What impact, if any, does this story have on the way you will approach evangelism in the future?

▼ **Discipleship / Skills Development**

- Watch 5 Thresholds Overview.
- Watch 5 Thresholds Openness To Change