

## Bible Study: Acts 10 Peter's Vision

Author: Luke, the companion of Paul

Audience: Theophilus, an important early disciple (Luke 1:3-4, Acts 1:1)

Date: approximately 63-64 A.D.

Location: unknown; Acts concludes with Paul under house arrest in Rome

Theme: the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ

Genre: historical narrative

### Outline

Cornelius receives a vision (10:1-8)

Peter receives a vision (10:9-16)

The Spirit sends Peter to Cornelius (10:17-23a)

Peter meets Cornelius (10:23b-33)

The Gentiles hear the gospel (10:34-43)

The Gentiles receive the Spirit (10:44-48)

### Observation

(2) Cornelius was a "devout" man, one who feared God with his whole household

(3) Cornelius sees an angelic messenger and sends 3 men to fetch Simon Peter

(11) Peter sees a vision of unclean animals and is told (3 times) to kill and eat

(14) Peter (naturally) refuses; he has never eaten anything defiled or unclean

(17) When the 3 messengers arrive, the Spirit orders Peter to go with them

(22) They describe Cornelius as "a righteous and God-fearing man"

(28) The interpretation of the vision: don't call any man common or unclean

(45) God forced the Jewish church to accept Gentiles despite their prejudices

### Interpretation

Does Acts 10:15 authorize the eating of unclean animals?

1. Although this vision occurred several years after the crucifixion, Peter was still observing the biblical food laws; therefore, God had not previously negated them (Acts 10:13-14).

Acts 10:13 A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"

Acts 10:14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy (*koinos*) and unclean (*akathartos*)."

2. The vision occurred 3 times at the precise moment that the 3 messengers arrived at Simon's house; therefore, the vision was symbolic of the messengers (Acts 10:7-8, 16-17).

Acts 10:7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants,

Acts 10:8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Acts 10:16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

Acts 10:17 Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate

3. Peter was initially perplexed about the vision but later realized that God was telling him not to call any man unholy or unclean; animals were not included in the interpretation (Acts 10:28).

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Acts 10:28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and *yet* God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy (*koinos*) or unclean (*akathartos*).

4. Acts 10:15 says that God cleansed what was unholy not what was unclean. The Greek term for unholy (*koinos*) is used when a clean object becomes defiled; but unclean animals cannot become defiled because they are always unclean (*akathartos*) by definition.

Acts 10:15 Again a voice *came* to him a second time, "What God has cleansed (*katharizo*), no longer consider unholy (*koinos*)."

5. According to Peter, God cleansed the Gentiles; but animals were not included in the discussion and those who include them are going beyond the biblical text (Acts 15:7-9).

Acts 15:7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Acts 15:8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

Acts 15:9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing (*katharizo*) their hearts by faith.

6. Peter's vision was not referring to dining etiquette within the early NT church since God-fearing Gentiles like Cornelius (who was called a righteous and devout man) would already know and obey the biblical food laws (cf. Acts 10:34-35).

Acts 10:34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality,

Acts 10:35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

7. The apostle John received a revelation in the late first century (long after Peter's vision) that clearly referred to unclean animals, which would make no sense if animals had been cleansed by God decades earlier (cf. Rev 18:2 ESV).

Rev 18:2 (ESV) And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

8. The assumption that Jesus and the apostles abolished the Law of Moses contradicts many clear Scriptures that state the very opposite (cf. Matt 5:17-20, Acts 21:24, Rom 2:25, 3:31); while Gentile Christians are not required to be circumcised and keep the whole Law, they are expected to keep a portion of it as explained in Scripture.

### Application

An error to avoid: calling other people unholy or unclean