

A Ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-30)

I. Introduction

A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. Cornelius's call to Peter (10:1-8)
2. Peter's Vision (10:9-48)
3. Peter defended his ministry to the Gentiles (11:1-18)
4. Antioch received the Good News (11:19-26)
5. Relief was sent to Judean Christians (11:27-30)

Question: Why was Peter reluctant to eat the meats in his vision?

B. In Acts 10:1-8 Cornelius had a desire to know the Lord.

1. Cornelius feared God.
 - a. Feared (*phobeo*) - to fear, be afraid of one.
 - b. Cornelius was afraid of God. His fear was not the kind of fear talked about in Hebrews 12:28.
 - c. In verse 2, Cornelius was a generous man (gave alms).
 - d. He prayed (*deomai* - begged) always.
2. Hebrews 12:28 says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with **reverence and godly fear:**"
 - a. Reverence (*aidos*) - respect (Hebrews 12:28).
 - b. Godly fear (*eulabeia*) - reverence toward God, godly fear, piety
3. In verse 4, afraid (*emphobos*) meant that he was terrified.
4. II Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."
5. **The Lord was dealing with Cornelius about getting saved. Cornelius was not Jewish.**

C. In Acts 10:9-16, the Lord was also dealing with the Apostle Peter. It is not uncommon for the Lord to work both ends of a salvation situation.

1. In verse 9, the time was noon (the sixth hour).
2. Peter was hungry and waiting for his meal.
3. In verses 10-16, he fell into a trance and had a vision.
 - a. In his vision, he saw a sheet from heaven, and on that sheet were all sorts of unclean animals.
 - b. When the Lord told him to rise and eat, Peter piously responded that he had never eaten anything unclean.
 - c. Though a Christian, Peter was still closely connected to some Jewish traditions.
 - d. In verse 16, the vision was repeated three times and then Peter awoke.
4. **When the Lord shows us something three times, then He is trying to tell us something that is important.**

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5. He was trying to prepare Peter's heart to minister to people that were not Jewish.
 - a. At that time, Cornelius and his household would have been just like the unclean meats that Peter saw in his vision.
 - b. Peter's attitude in the trance would seem ironic since he had just dealt with a bunch of Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17).
- D. In verses 17-24, Peter received the men sent by Cornelius.
 1. In verse 24, he accompanied the men to Caesarea.
 2. In verses 25-26, Cornelius fell to worship Peter, but Peter stopped him.
 2. In verse 28, he had learned his lesson from the vision.
 3. As much as he had been through, Peter still would not have responded properly to the request by Cornelius without the vision.
 4. Peter was the early leader of the early church, but he was also very much a work in progress just as all of us.

Question: What did Peter do when he got to Cornelius house? How did Cornelius's household react to Peter?

- II. In verses 29-33, Peter did not even know why he was in Caesarea.
 - A. Notice two very important verbs and one very important adverb that clearly show how we should respond to the Holy Spirit.
 1. In Acts 8:28, the Holy Spirit told Philip to talk to the Ethiopian eunuch. In Acts 8:29, Philip **ran** to do what the Holy Spirit wanted him to do.
 2. In Acts 10:33, Cornelius **immediately** did what the Holy Spirit told him to do by sending for Peter.
 3. In Acts 10:23, Peter **went** with the men from Caesarea even though he did not know why he was being summoned. He had been given clearance to go by the Holy Spirit, and he went without hesitation.
 - B. **When the Lord is leading us to do something, we should do it eagerly and without hesitation.**
 - C. In verses 34-48, Peter preached Jesus to them and they believed and were saved.
 1. Peter preached to them about Jesus' death and resurrection.
 2. He told them that many people had seen the resurrected Lord.
 3. He told them that Jesus had commissioned them to preach the gospel so that others could be saved.
 - D. As Peter preached, the Holy Spirit came upon those believing Gentiles, and they spoke in tongues.
 1. Remember that speaking in tongues was probably a sign gift to show God's approval.
 2. Speaking in tongues would also have been a sign to unbelieving Jews.
 3. Notice also that the Holy Spirit came upon them when they got saved.
 4. The new converts were baptized in the Lord's name.

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Question: Why were the brethren upset when Peter returned?

III. In Acts 11:1-18, the Jerusalem believers were bothered that Peter had ministered to Gentiles.

- A. In verses 4-17, Peter defended his actions.
 - 1. He shared with them the vision that he had had.
 - 2. In verse 12, he indicated that he was acting on specific orders from the Holy Spirit.
 - 3. **Note that we will never go wrong by obeying the Holy Spirit.**
 - 4. In verse 15, Peter told the disciples that Cornelius' household had experienced the Holy Spirit in the same manner as they once had.
- B. In verses 19-24 saints that had scattered from the Jerusalem persecution were as far away as Antioch preaching the gospel.
 - 1. Many people believed and were saved.
 - 2. Barnabas was sent to Antioch to check on what was being done.
 - 3. When Barnabas arrived, he encouraged and commended the people.

Question: Why did Barnabas go to Tarsus to get Saul?

IV. In Acts 11:25-30, Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Saul.

- A. Some time had passed since Saul got saved in Acts 9 and Peter went to Caesarea, possibly as much as ten years.
 - 1. The first eleven chapters probably happened around 32-35 AD.
 - 2. Acts 11:19 and Acts 11:20 show a possible time gap.
 - 3. Acts 12:1, when James was martyred, is believed to have been around 44 AD.
- B. **During those ten silent years, Saul was in Damascus and in Tarsus, presumably building churches.**
 - 1. **Galatians 1:18 says, "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."**
 - 2. Remember that Saul had been sent to Tarsus in Acts 9:30.
 - 3. **Galatians 1:21 says, "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;"**
 - 4. One of the cities in that area was Tarsus.
 - 5. II Corinthians 11:23-30, Saul was greatly persecuted.
 - 6. **Since those specific persecutions are not recorded as part of his missionary journeys, the conclusion is that he suffered those things while in Tarsus.**
- C. Therefore, just before 44 AD, Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Saul.
 - 1. Their first missionary journey was probably 47-49 AD.
 - 2. Paul wrote Galatians in 49 AD and I and II Thessalonians in 51 AD.
 - 3. That makes sense. He started the churches before he wrote to them.
- D. In Acts 11:26, Christians were first called Christians in Antioch.

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1. At that time, it was a term of derision, not respect.
2. During the world's economic crisis, most people want someone to solve their money problems.
 - a. If a Christian tries to preach Christ, a lot of people will object.
 - b. Even though many people got saved, many people did not.
 - c. People are looking for a solution, but they are not looking for the Lord.
 - d. People's attitudes today is ripe for the antichrist.
- E. In Acts 11:27-30, a famine occurred.
 1. In a few years, the Roman government would begin to blame Christians for such difficult circumstances.
 2. They would also begin viewing Christians as cannibals because of their practice of Communion.
 3. Paul and Barnabas carried provisions to Judea to help out during the famine.

Question: How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson? How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

- V. The Holy Spirit was doing much in the early church at this time.
 - A. He was opening a way for Gentiles to be saved and accepted by Jewish believers.
 - B. He was developing Saul for his future ministry to the Gentiles.
 - C. He was spreading the gospel through scattered Christians.
 - D. He was beginning a mighty work in Antioch.
 - E. He was preparing Saul and Barnabas for missionary work.
- VI. Next week's lesson: The First Apostle Martyred and the Second Attempted (Acts 12:1-25)