



Message #24

“2 MEN + 2 VISIONS = FOOD 4 THOUGHT”

Acts 10:1-23

As the last chapter showed, a great shift is taking place in the book of Acts. The Gospel is moving towards the Gentiles. This has been a steady progression in recent chapters....

Acts 6:1 – Jews with a Hebrew or Greek background

Acts 8:1 – the “half-Jews” of Samaria

Acts 8:27 – an African-Jewish convert

Acts 10...and now a Gentile! It is nothing short of a miracle that a faith, which grew out of Judaism, could be offered to Gentiles so quickly!

Some argue that this shift represents a turn from the Jews. However, viewing it this way is inadequate. The shift is not a turn from the Jews, but a turn to include the Gentiles.

One Covenant Theology

Throughout history, there has been much discussion, and theological systems have been developed, to try and make sense of the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the new covenant of Christ.

Some have even developed a sort of “two-covenant theology”.....which argues that God has one covenant with the Jews and another covenant with Christians. In other words, God’s covenant with Jews does not require faith in Christ for salvation. However, this is not consistent with New Testament Scripture that clearly teaches that there is only one way to salvation for all: Jesus Christ.

As Romans 1:16 says...*I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*”

Paul, who wrote this, was one of the most committed Jews before he dramatically came to faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. His own testimony would be conclusive proof against such a “two-covenant theology”.

Conversely, we should not take it that the Jews are uniformly closed to the gospel, nor that Jesus has turned away from the Jewish people.

Paul, again, writes in Romans 11:1-5:

I ask then: Did God reject His people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how He appealed to God against Israel: ³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? ⁴ And what was God's answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

So, there is not a separate covenant for the Jews and another one for the Gentiles. God the Father provided the way and means of salvation for ALL people through the atoning death and subsequent resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. As Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room on the night of His betrayal – “This cup is the new covenant in my blood...” (1 Cor.11:25).

That having been said, we must still acknowledge the tremendous paradigm shift in thinking and belief that God was taking His followers through as He revealed to them that His plan and purpose, indeed, His heart, was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jewish people. It was a gradual, and dramatic, dismantling of all the preconceived notions and beliefs. And this chapter 10 of Acts is one of the major turning points in this whole journey of transition for the early church.

Acts 10:1 introduces us to Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Regiment, one of the most prestigious sections of the Roman army. He occupied a high position of military authority and a high station in social life.

But not only was Cornelius an admired and elite centurion...he was also a devout “God-fearer” (10:2). This was someone who admired Israel’s religion and worshipped Israel’s God...but had not converted to Judaism. In other words...Cornelius had a heart for God and was seeking to please Him, as was his whole household.

What would a “God-fearer” look like in your culture today?

Read Acts 10:1-8. List the qualities of Cornelius’ character as found in these verses.

VISION #1 (Acts 10:3-8)

According to 10:4, what caused God to take notice of Cornelius?

To what extent are prayer and giving to the poor priorities for you?

What can we learn from how Cornelius responded to this vision?

VISION #2 (Acts 10:23a)

It is difficult for us to grasp the impassable gulf that existed in those days between the Jews and the Gentiles. In the OT, commitment to God was demonstrated by SEPARATION FROM the unclean world. Now, through this vision and other means, God was transitioning the church to see that holiness in the “new community of faith” was to be demonstrated through an active ENGAGEMENT WITH the world and the Gentiles.

In what ways did God prepare Peter for Cornelius?



Verse 15 is very significant. Explain what you think it means then....and now.

Peter did not fully understand what God was revealing to him in this vision. But he still responded obediently. **Have you ever been called to step out in faith obediently, even when you did not fully understand what God was calling you to do, or where He was leading you to go?**

FOOD 4 THOUGHT:

As Cornelius’ men arrive and speak with Peter (v 17-18) we can already see that something is beginning to change in him. He’s doing things he doesn’t fully comprehend yet, like (prompted by the Spirit, v19-20) inviting Gentiles into the house to spend the night (v23). This would be unheard of for a Jewish person! But we see, by the end of Acts 10:23, Peter is living in an unclean tanner’s house, and offering hospitality to unclean Gentiles! This is the power of God causing this radical transformation.

Do you think Christians have traditions and customs that have grown up over the years? What are they? Do they put people off the church?

How do you see God’s purpose, as stated in Acts 1:8, being fulfilled in this passage?

What would have been the consequences if Cornelius or Peter had not obeyed God?

Ask God to make you open to get to know, to love and to share your relationship with Jesus with people of other ethnicities, cultures and religions.