

WHAT GOD HAS MADE CLEAN, DO NOT CALL COMMON!
ACTS CH10:1-16

INTRODUCTION

A set of keys! Peter has already been told by Christ “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” Matthew Ch16:19! How has he used these keys so far? Pretty well! Acts Ch2:14-41, used the keys for the Jews in Jerusalem, Acts Ch8:14-17 he has used the keys for the Samaritans!

But how well will he use the keys for the Gentiles? According to John Stott “The tragedy was that Israel twisted the doctrine of election into one of favouritism, became filled with racial pride and hatred, despised Gentiles as dogs and developed traditions which kept them apart. No orthodox Jew would ever enter into the home of a Gentile, even a God-fearer, or invite such into his home (see verse 28). On the contrary all familiar intercourse with Gentiles was forbidden and no pious Jew would of course have sat down at the table of a Gentile” (John Stott, Commentary on Acts, pg185).

A GODLY CHARACTER! V1-4

The City of Caesarea was named after Augustus Caesar and had been the centre of Roman administration in the province of Judea since AD 6. It was where the Roman governors lived (Acts Ch23:23-24), and its population was mainly Gentile, having been the place where Philip had previously gone (Acts Ch8:40) and at some stage settled in (Acts Ch21:8-9).

What do we know about Cornelius? He lived in Caesarea, was in charge of 100 men as he was a Centurion. His 100 men were part of an Italian Cohort, 600 men and 6 Centurions, a devout man and along with his household (family and slaves) was a God-fearing man. What does that mean? It means he was religious, seen in his praying and giving to the poor! Cornelius believed in the God of Israel, but had not converted to Judaism (Acts Ch6:5).

It's 3pm and Cornelius is praying, presumably based on Exodus Ch29:38-41 which sets out a pattern for daily praying. God can speak to us when we are praying and seeking Him – Acts Ch13:2 + Luke Ch3:2 + Ch9:29.

An Angel appears to him as he is praying, saying that his prayers and alms have ascended to the Lord as a “memorial offering.” A “Memorial offering/sacrifice” is an offering to God asking “Please Lord remember us with favour” (Leviticus Ch23:2, 9, 16).

A GODLY CHALLENGE! V5-8

Angels play an important role in furthering God's purposes - Ch5:19; Ch8:26; Ch10:3; Ch12:7; Ch27:23. The angel gives specific information so that the challenge can be clearly understood and responded to.

But how will Cornelius respond to the revelation? He acts immediately to the

challenge, calls three responsible and trusted men, within his service, and tells them everything!

What do we know about these three men?

- v7 two are men whom serve him
- v7 one is a soldier
- v8 they were completely trustworthy and could handle the “revelation” that had been given him!

A GODLY CLEANLINESS! V9-16

Instead of an angel, “the heavens opened” just like in Luke Ch3:21 + Acts Ch7:56, signalling a divine revelation, which ***in this case is used to stimulate the Church to Mission (Ch1:8)***. Now Peter is being used to bring about healing, as we've only just read, to a disabled person. He is also used to bring a much loved Saint, Tabitha, back to life, but how will he respond to going to the home of a gentile (a person belonging to another race)? Peter has been brought up to show ***“Prejudice – preconceived opinion not based on reason or experience!”***
Peter's deep seated prejudice based on race without reason or experience is what is needed to be converted, not so much Cornelius being converted but the conversion of Peter's prejudice is at stake!

Leviticus Ch11:1-47 – Unclean! The clean and unclean provisions of the law, were all temporary! They were initially there designed to keep Israel a holy and distinct people! That is, until the time when both Jews and Gentiles could receive the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ alone! ***That time is now!***

However for Peter and all other Jews there was an impassable gulf between Jew and Gentile, because of what they had previously been taught!

Peter had said “No” before – Matt Ch16:22 relating to Jesus having to suffer and die! John Ch13:8 – relating to “the washing of all of me.” John Ch13:37 – relating to the denial of Jesus!

The challenge for Peter is that he be willing to acknowledge God's right to determine what is clean and to redefine, through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, the boundaries of the Gospel!

Gentiles (all other races that are not Jewish) no longer have to become Jewish proselytes! They no longer need to follow the traditions of the Jews, but the example of Christ!

APPLICATION

Thinking and praying about running a “Christianity Course” on a Thursday lunchtime at ours for 8 weeks – Thursday May 25th, June 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th, July 6th, 20th + 27th!