

34. The Lord Gave Peter a Vision

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to be led by the Holy Spirit so that they can enjoy the blessing of the Lord as He leads them in their lives. That leading by the Holy Spirit will bring great joy to their lives as they see that the Lord has chosen to work through their lives. The Lord was leading in the life of Cornelius to prepare the way for the Gentiles to receive the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see how the Lord worked in the life of Peter to prepare him to take that message to the Gentiles.

Acts 10:9-16 says, “The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.” Here, we see that the Lord had to prepare Peter for the coming of the messengers from Cornelius.

This preparation happened as Peter was praying on the housetop about noon. Most of the houses in the lands surrounding the area of Judea and Galilee had flat roofs. The rooftop provided an ideal place for a person to get away from the activities going on in the house and spend time alone in prayer and meditation. While Peter was praying, he became very hungry and wanted to eat. However, the food was still being prepared. God caused this great hunger to help Peter learn and understand a very important lesson. The word translated “trance” is something that so shocks the mind that it causes the mind to be filled with great wonder and amazement.

In this trance, Peter saw the heaven opened and something that looked like a large sheet tied at each of the four corners come down out of heaven. This thing that looked like a large sheet had all kinds of creatures in it. Some were four-footed animals; other creatures were wild animals. There were creeping creatures crawling in this thing that looked like a large sheet; there were also many birds of the air. These animals, creeping things and birds were unclean animals that the Jews were not allowed to eat. Leviticus 11 talks about these various creatures. Leviticus 11:43-44 says, “‘You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. “For I *am* the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I *am* holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”” Other verses in that chapter talk about unclean animals and birds.

Then, Peter heard a voice saying, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” Since Peter was a good Jew that had tried to be obedient to the Old Testament law, he had never eaten such animals, birds and creeping things. As a result, Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

The Jewish Christians continued to follow those dietary laws even though they had become followers of Christ. Many years later, Paul returned to Jerusalem and greeted the leaders of the church. The leaders of the church said to Paul in Acts 21:20, “And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.’” Peter certainly felt that way as he looked at that sheet that day.

That sheet-like object came down three times and each time the Lord invited Peter to kill and eat. Each time, the voice told Peter, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” Each time Peter refused to eat. Then the object was caught back up into heaven. Acts 10:17-18 says, “Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.” Here, we see that Peter was really trying to figure out what this vision meant.

Meanwhile, the men that had been sent from Caesarea to Joppa had arrived in the town of Joppa. They asked the people of the town where Simon, the tanner, lived and had been directed to his house. Peter was still on the rooftop trying to figure out the meaning of the vision when the men arrived at the gate of the house. These three men followed the instructions of Cornelius and called to ask whether Simon who was surnamed Peter was staying at the house.

Acts 10:19-22 says, “While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.’ Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, ‘Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?’ And they said, ‘Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.’” Peter was still thinking about the vision that he had seen when the three men arrived at the house.

Then, the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter and let him know that there were three men standing at the door. The Holy Spirit told Peter that these men were looking for him. The Holy Spirit did not tell Peter that these men were Gentiles and had been sent by a Gentile Roman soldier. Instead, the Holy Spirit told Peter that he was to go with the three men. He was not to have doubts in his heart or even to ask any questions. Ephesians 2:14-15 says, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace.” Here, we see that the Lord had chosen Peter and Cornelius to be the first to show what God meant by the fact that Christ had broken down this middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles and created one new man in Christ.

The Lord told Peter that he was to go with these three men without any doubts in his mind. The word translated “doubting” means *to make a distinction or to discriminate*. James 2:2-4 says, “For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes

and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” In these verses, the word is translated “partiality” and talks about those who discriminate against the poor. In Acts, Peter was warned not to discriminate against the men who were at the door, but he was to go with them. He would soon learn that they were Gentiles.

Peter immediately went down to the men that had been sent to him from Cornelius. He told them that he was the person for whom they were looking. Then, he asked them for what reason they had come. They began their request by telling Peter they had come from Cornelius, who was a Roman centurion. As soon as they mentioned that Cornelius was a Roman centurion, Peter knew that he was talking to Gentiles. Suddenly, Peter understood what God had told him in the trance. Acts 10:15 says, “And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’” Verse sixteen said this was repeated a total of three times. Christ had told Peter three times in John 21:15-17 to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep. Since Christ repeated the statement here in Acts three times, Peter suddenly realized that the Lord also had lambs and sheep among the Gentiles. Peter had been told that Christ had sent these men.

The three men told Peter that Cornelius was a respected man. He was a just man. He was a man who feared God. He had a good reputation among all of the Jews. However, the last two things that these three men said were the most important things. They said that Cornelius had been divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon Peter to his house. The word translated “divinely instructed” means *to be instructed by or commanded by God*. Luke 2:26 says, “And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” God had instructed Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Christ. Here, these men said they had come for Peter, because Cornelius had been given instructions by God to send for him.

The three men said that Cornelius had been instructed to hear words from Peter. In John 6:44, Christ had said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” We are to always remember that the Holy Spirit convicts – John 16:8-11, the Father draws – John 6:44 and the Son seeks and saves – Luke 19:10. Our part in the ministry of evangelism is defined right here. We are to speak the Word of God so that each member of the Trinity can do His part in bringing people to salvation. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We want to show our physical and spiritual children how to work with the Trinity in evangelism by sharing the Word of God instead of our own words. The Lord will work through His Word to bring people to true faith in Christ. We become partners with the Trinity as we share the Word of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to work with the Trinity in the ministry of evangelism.