

Acts 057  
Gentile Salvation, Part 2  
Acts 10:3-16  
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We are at a juncture in the Book of Acts where we are now seeing a major step forward in the growth and the development of the church. A full-fledged Gentile, an uncircumcised Gentile, and his immediate entourage is going to be led to Christ. This has never happened. All the converts thus far in the Book of Acts have been Jewish or half-breed Jewish Samaritans or proselytes—Gentiles converted to Judaism. We have not seen a full-fledged Gentile conversion. So what we are reading about here is really big.

We come to Acts 10:1-8 where Cornelius, whom we read about last week, has a vision. Cornelius is going to be the convert, and he was introduced to us last week in Acts 10:1. We got a glimpse of his spiritual state in Acts 10:2—he is unsaved, but he is seeking God. This takes place in Caesarea, and it is here that Cornelius has a vision (Acts 10:3-6). The vision is precipitated through a visitation from an angel (Acts 10:3-4). Then that angel is going to give him a commissioning (Acts 10:5-6).

- I. Cornelius Introduced (Acts 10:1-8)
  - A. Cornelius introduced (1)
  - B. Cornelius' spiritual state (2)
  - C. Vision (3-6)
    - 1. Angel (3-4)
      - a) Appearance (3)
      - b) Cornelius' response (4)
    - 2. Commission (5-6)
      - a) Fetch Peter (5)
      - b) Location (6)
  - D. Cornelius' obedience (7-8)
    - 1. Servants (7)
    - 2. Sending to Joppa (8)

Notice, first of all, the appearance of this angel to Cornelius:

*"About the ninth hour of the day, he he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, 'Cornelius!'" (Acts 10:3).*

When it says "the ninth hour" that would probably be about 3:00 in the afternoon. That is usually the time when I am getting ready to take my nap, but Cornelius was not napping. This is when he saw a vision through an angel.

All the way through the Bible, God uses angels, but we also know that there can be angels of deception. Paul warns us of this in the Book of Galatians:

*"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"*  
(Galatians 1:8).

Just because someone sees an angel, it does not necessarily mean it is of God, unless the angel's message aligns with God's revealed truth. In this case it does. This is a true angelic encounter, where God dispatched an angel to give Cornelius a vision.

Next you see Cornelius' response:

*"And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, 'What is it, Lord?' And he [the angel] said to him [Cornelius], 'Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God'"* (Acts 10:4).

One of the things that is very interesting here is that when Cornelius sees this angel, he is alarmed. That is a normal reaction in the Bible when holiness, as from an angel who does not sin, comes into the presence of a sinful being. When that kind of encounter happens, almost invariably in the Bible, you will see the reaction of fear. The reason people are afraid is because you are in the presence of a being who is holy, who has a right to destroy us because we are unholy.

*"In the year King Uzziah death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple"* (Isaiah 6:1).

What is interesting is Isaiah's reaction. Keep in mind who Isaiah is: he is one of our top writing prophets. His mouth was used as an oracle of God, but even he, in the presence of God, was terrified.

*"Then I said,  
'Woe to me, for I am ruined!  
Because I am a man of unclean lips'"* (Isaiah 6:5).

The most important part of a prophet's anatomy is his mouth, because that is what gave him the ability to proclaim the oracles of God.

*"And I live among a people of unclean lips;  
For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts'"* (Isaiah 6:5).

John, who had leaned against Christ's chest in the Upper Room in John 13, saw a vision of Jesus on the island of Patmos about 60 years later. This is the disciple whom Jesus loved. All the way through John's gospel.

*"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last'" (Revelation 1:17).*

Even Peter, when Jesus was on the earth, got a glimpse of the holiness of Jesus.

*"...he fell down at Jesus feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!'" (Luke 5:8).*

You remember Adam and Eve after they sinned in Eden. What was their reaction to God?

*"They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:8).*

This is always the reaction of sinful people when they come into the presence of God. They are uncomfortable. Even the holiest of God's people are uncomfortable. It is like dealing with a police officer. I have a good relationship with police officers. A police officer, to me, is very comforting. Their presence is comforting, but if I have sped in here at 85 miles an hour and a police officer walks in, I do not like the presence of that police officer; it makes me feel uncomfortable because I am in the presence of someone who has the authority to punish me. Rightfully so.

This is one of the things that is being lost in modern-day Christianity: the holiness of God. This awe of God, fear of God. We have become so comfortable with the grace of God, that we look at God as a pal—my best bud kind of thing. I have seen the T-shirt that says: "God's rad, and He's my Dad," and all this kind of stuff, which is fine. He is our Abba Father, but I am wondering, in all of that, have we lost sight of exactly who we are dealing with with God?

If God were to show up in this building today in His glorified state, it would scare the absolute daylights out of all of us. When you understand this, you understand why the transferred righteousness of Jesus is such a big deal, because that is the only thing that gives you the ability to stand in the presence of God. We do not do well standing before His presence in our own self righteousness, but only in Christ's transferred righteousness.

That is why Cornelius is intimidated here in Acts 10:4. It is not that he was alarmed; it says that he was much alarmed when he saw this angel. There is also a line of thought—I was raised as a Christian with this—that God does not hear the prayers of unbelievers. I was taught that from very early on as a Christian, the only prayer God hears is "God have mercy on me as a sinner." Other than that, He does not hear the prayers of unbelievers.

You can see here that that is not true, because Cornelius is unsaved. He is seeking God to the best of his ability. It says in the second part of Acts 10:4:

*"And he said to him, 'Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God'" (Acts 10:4).*

I am not saying that Cornelius was right with God, because he was unsaved. The only way to be right with God is through His Son, Jesus Christ. But we should not overstate the case and make it sound as if God never hears the prayers of an unsaved person, because clearly Acts 10:4 is saying the opposite.

There are a lot of things we believe as Christians that you do not really find in the Bible. Most of us believe in the Book of Exodus. In the 10th plague there was an angel of death that came through Egypt and killed all of the firstborn. How many of you have heard that? An angel of death, plague number ten. I believed that forever.

I was sitting in a class in Dallas Seminary, and my Old Testament professor, Dr. Ron Allen, said, "There is no such thing as an angel of death with plague number ten in the Book of Exodus." I was like, "What do you mean? We have all taught this and believed it forever." He said, "Read it for yourself. It does not say anything about an angel of death. What it says is: God came through, not an angel of death, and took all of the firstborn all over Egypt." I asked him, "Then why does everybody think it is an angel of death?" He says, "It is Christian folklore."

We hear something, one of our favorite preachers says it and it gets passed on. We do not examine the Scriptures for ourselves to see if there really is an angel of death. We are supposed to be Bereans. I looked through it and my professor was right: there is no angel of death. We have just made that up completely, just like this idea that God never hears the prayers of unsaved people. That is also made up.

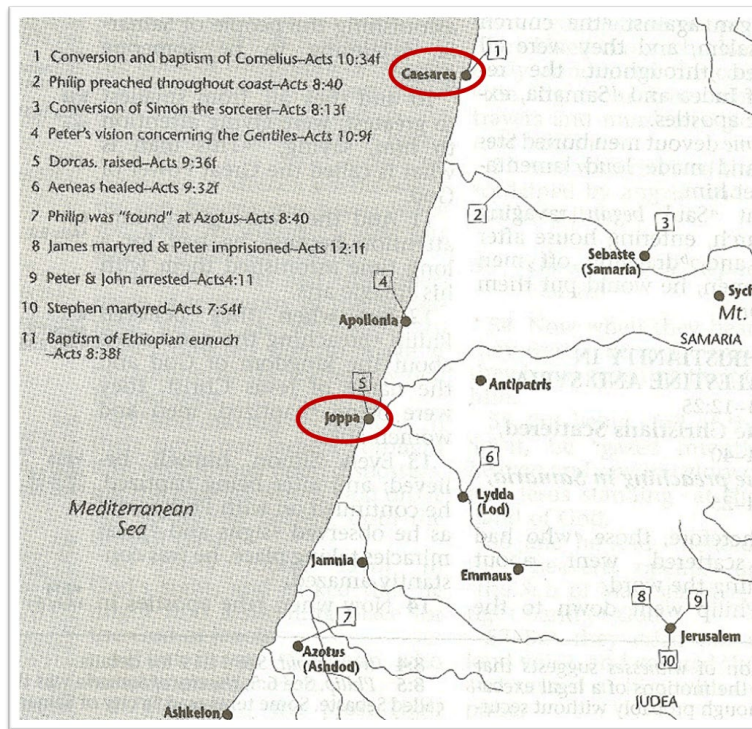
So be careful to let the Scripture be your guide and not rumor and popular opinion, or else you are going to end up believing a lot of things if you do not do your due diligence—things that the Bible never categorically teaches. I am a work in progress in that regard, just like you guys are. There are a lot of things I have had to unlearn.

Nobody likes their file drawers rearranged, right? Once we get in a thought pattern, we are comfortable with it. But the last time I checked, the Bible says "renew your mind" (Romans 12:2). We are in this constant process of mental renewal as Christians, which is a good thing. It is part of our growth. Some people get so comfortable with their file drawers that they cling on to them, and they get mad at anybody that will challenge their arrangement of their mental file drawers. That is when you stop growing. We do not want to be that way; we want to hold all thoughts hostage to the Word of God.

This angel appears to Cornelius, Cornelius responds, and the angel gives Cornelius a command. The first thing he is supposed to do is to go get Peter:

*"Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter" (Acts 10:5).*

This is taking place in Caesarea, up north. Joppa is where one of the healings happened at the end of Acts 9. That is a city about 30 miles south of Caesarea. That is where Peter was. Cornelius, who is about to become the first Gentile convert in Christianity, is supposed to dispatch some of his folks to go get Peter from Joppa. He is a centurion, we know from Acts 10:1, so he has people under his authority.



Notice in Acts 10:5 that the angel distinguishes Peter from Simon:

*"Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter" (Acts 10:5).*

Simon is Peter's Hebrew name; Cephas is his Aramaic name; and what is translated here as Peter, is Petros, his Greek name. The reason the angel has to make that distinction is found in Acts 9:43, where we learn that Peter was staying at the home of a tanner in Joppa.

A tanner is not someone that has a tanning salon. A tanner is someone who works with the carcasses of dead animals. There is a reason why the Lord had Peter stay at a tanner's home. Under the Mosaic Law, animal carcasses were unclean (Leviticus 11:39-40). We are moving into an age of time where, after 1,500 years, the Mosaic Law is going to be set aside. The Lord had Peter stay at the home of this tanner because He

was trying to break down his legalism and adherence to the Mosaic Law. He is bringing Peter along, gradually, as we are going to see here.

The reason he has to distinguish the names is because the tanner's name was Simon:

*"And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon" (Acts 9:43).*

The angel says, "Go to Joppa and get Simon." He has to distinguish which Simon he is talking about, because there are two Simon's in the same house—Simon the Tanner and Simon Peter. The angel makes that distinction by throwing in the word "Peter." "Go to Joppa and get Simon and make sure it is the right one; he also goes by the name Peter or Petros."

You remember that the Lord gave him that name in Matthew 16:

*"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18).*

Contrary to Roman Catholic dogma, Peter was not the first pope. The church was never built on Peter; it was built on Peter's confession of faith, his accurate confession of who Jesus was. That is the "petra"—a different word in Greek—that the church was built upon.

Peter's name means "petros"—little stone. The Lord gave him this name "stone" meaning stability, but the guy was anything but stable. He is the guy that walked out on the water and then got scared and sank (Matthew 14:22-33). He is the guy that opened his mouth and Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33). I call him the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth, because he was the guy who was always putting his foot in his mouth. That is why we love the guy, because we can identify with him. He is the guy that denied the Lord three times.

But the Lord did not name him based on what he was, but what he would be. That is so encouraging. The Lord, when He works with us, He does not see us as we are. He sees us as to what we are going to become. That guy would become an immovable rock. He is the guy that was crucified upside down, according to tradition, because he felt if he was crucified the regular way, it would dishonor Jesus. The Lord brought Peter, Petros, a long way in terms of the development of his character, which means there is hope for us. If God can do that with Peter, he can do a work in our lives as well.

"Go get Petros." he throws that name in here to distinguish him from the other Simon the Tanner. Then the angel gives the location—Joppa:

*"He is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea" (Acts 10:6).*

That fits the geography pretty well, because Joppa is right there on the water. In fact, when you fly into Israel, you usually fly into Tel Aviv; nearby is Joppa. It is one of the first places you have a chance to visit when you leave the airport. Joppa is where Jonah fled. Remember, he took a boat to Spain in the west when God said to go east? He caught the boat there at Joppa. This is where Peter performed that miracle that we read about at the end of Acts 9, and it is where Peter was staying at this tanner's home.

"Go to Joppa and get him."

After the location is given, Cornelius does what he is told. He is a soldier, and that is what soldiers do: they follow orders. He is alarmed by this angel, but he is smart enough to do exactly what the angel tells him to do. You have a record of Cornelius' obedience (Acts 10:7-8). The first thing he does is he gets his servants, just like the angel told him:.

*"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 10:7).*

He is sending off two servants and a soldier. You will notice that the soldier there is called "devout." That is the exact same word that is used of Cornelius:

*"Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was the Italian cohort, a devout man..." (Acts 10:1-2).*

Cornelius had renounced paganism, and he was actually a God-seeker—he was seeking truth. This person that he dispatches to fetch Peter is also of that mindset, a religiously devout person, someone who wanted the truth.

If someone wants the truth, let me tell you something: God will move heaven and earth to get him the truth. You wonder why so many people today move from one lie to another? The reason is, largely, that they do not want the truth. But if someone really wants the truth and they pray to God accordingly, then Katy bar the door. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). God will do anything to get the truth to that person.

That is what we are seeing here with this miraculous encounter that Cornelius is about to have. He sends his folks there to Joppa:

*"And after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa" (Acts 10:8).*

Joppa is there, about 30 miles south of Caesarea, where Cornelius was. That ends the first major increment of Cornelius' salvation.

There are seven parts to this because some of it involves Peter in Acts 11, having to defend himself to the Jerusalem church. The whole story of the conversion of Cornelius is found in Acts 10:1-11:18. That is the first part of it: Cornelius' vision.

- II. Peter's vision (10:9-16)
  - A. Occasion (9-10a)
    - 1. Timing (9a)
    - 2. Spiritual preparation (9b)
    - 3. Physical preparation (10a)
  - B. Vision (10b-13)
    - 1. Trance (10b)
    - 2. Vision's description (11)
    - 3. Sheet's content (12)
    - 4. Command (13)
  - C. Peter's response (14)
  - D. God's command (15)
  - E. Vision's repetition (16a)
  - F. Vision's conclusion (16b)

We move into Acts 10:9-16, where Peter has a vision. Cornelius is in Caesarea, having his vision; Peter is in Joppa having his vision. This is really important because it shows you that God is working on both ends. He is giving truth by way of vision to Cornelius involving Peter, and then He is simultaneously telling Peter what Cornelius' entourage is about to do in terms of showing up in Joppa.

This is important because a lot of people in the Christian life will come up to you—I have had it happen to me many times from people when you count emails—and they will say something like, "God told me to tell you such and such." I had a guy that knew I was going to be speaking at a conference, and he claimed that he had some kind of direct channel to God. God told him to tell me what I am supposed to talk about at the conference.

When that kind of thing happens, the natural reaction is, "That is very interesting," but let a matter be confirmed by two to three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6). This is what the Bible teaches over and over again. If God really told you that, it is just a matter of time before He tells me the same thing. That becomes important because a lot of people will use this to bully you into doing something that they want you to do.

If you do not know better, you will be bullied because you will think, "I should not argue with it because I would be arguing with God," not understanding how God operates. God does not operate that way. If He is working, He will work on both sides of the equation. You see Him working on the Cornelius side, and you see Him working simultaneously on the Peter side.

My wife, who was in YWAM (Youth With A Mission), said these guys would come up to some of the ladies in the ministry and say, "God told me that you are supposed to be my



wife." The lady is saying, That is interesting. God never told me that. If I am supposed to marry you, I think God will number one, get the spinach from between your teeth; number two, put some deodorant on; number three and number four, if God really told you that, then He would impress that upon me as well."

All of that to say that there are patterns in how God works. He does not give people some vision or something and say, "Relay it to somebody else." If He does that, He will confirm it on your end some way, somehow, as well. The matter is to be confirmed by two to three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6). Just as God is working on the Cornelius side, He is working on the Peter side simultaneously. Both men are receiving visions: Cornelius's vision (Acts 10:1-8); Peter's vision (Acts 10:9-16).

The occasion of Peter's vision in Joppa is found in Acts 10:9-10. We have the timing of it:

*"On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray" (Acts 10:9).*

It says there at the end of Acts 10:9 that it was *"about the sixth hour."* That would be around noon.

Then you have Peter's spiritual preparation:

*"On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray" (Acts 10:9).*

Going up on the roof and praying is actually normal for Hebrews. That is what they did all the way through the Babylonian captivity. In fact, in 1 Kings 8, Solomon tells them, "When you go into the captivity, you are to face Jerusalem and pray towards it three times a day" (1 Kings 8:44). What is Daniel doing in the Book of Daniel, in the days of the Babylonian captivity?

*"Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously" (Daniel 6:10).*

This kind of public prayer—facing Jerusalem from Babylon—Solomon told them to do that, not if, but when they go into the captivity. That is what you see Daniel doing. It does not say that Peter is facing toward Jerusalem, but he is on his roof. It is public. He is praying. In fact, the reason why Daniel was thrown into the lion's den is because he was public about his prayer life. The Persians had signed a law that said: No public prayer. That was designed to entrap Daniel, because once a law is signed in the tradition of the Medes and the Persians, it cannot be revoked (Esther 8:8).

They got this king, this Persian king, to sign this law, deceiving the king into having to arrest Daniel. Because Daniel ignored the law—civil disobedience, which is justified in some contexts. The state does not have an unlimited right to tell us to do anything anytime, according to the Bible. A lot of people misquote Romans 13 to make it sound that way, but that is not what the Bible says.

The Bible says if the state is saying, "Do not do something that God says to do, or to do something that God says do not do"—like hypothetically, do not show up at church for three months because of a virus? And when you sing, do not sing too loudly, because that could spread the virus. When the state starts getting involved in things like that, we have to start thinking about who we are interested in pleasing here: God or man? The Bible says,

*"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord" (Psalm 98:4, KJV).*

God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3).

Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together (Hebrews 10:25).

When we have an administration or regime, whatever you want to call it, that starts to interfere with freedom of religion, we need to start thinking about civil disobedience in the United States, because that is what Daniel did—he disobeyed. It got him thrown in the lion's den, but so be it. That is where this public prayer idea comes from.

Next you see Peter on the roof of his house—very similar to Daniel, praying—*"about the sixth hour."* There is physical preparation that takes place before Peter sees this vision:

*"But he became hungry and was desiring to eat" (Acts 10:10).*

That is hard for us to identify with when we just had hamburgers for dinner and the stomach is full. Peter is going to see a vision of a sheet. He is going to see animals in the sheet, and he is going to be told to arise, kill, and eat. You do not really have an incentive to do that unless you have an appetite. God is preparing Peter in advance through his physical hunger and prayer life, for the vision he is about to receive.

God does that before He does a work in your life. He will prepare you in advance in some way, somehow, for that. He does not just throw us out to the wolves, so to speak. He prepares us in advance in a lot of different ways. Here is Peter, being prepared in advance. I believe that God made Peter hungry in light of what he was about to see, and what did he see? Here comes the vision. He is put into a trance:

*"...but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance" (Acts 10:10).*

The word "trance" in Greek is "ekstasis," where we get the word "ecstasy" from. It is almost like an altered state of consciousness that Peter was put into by God.

He saw a vision. Here is what he saw in the vision:

*"And he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by the four corners to the ground" (Acts 10:11).*

Then he sees this sheet and he sees the sheets' contents:

*"And there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air" (Acts 10:12).*

In it there were all kinds of animals: some were clean according to the Mosaic Law (Kosher), and some were unclean (non-kosher). That is what God did at Mount Sinai. After they came out of Egypt in the west, they went down to Mount Sinai, and they received the Mosaic Law—the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. That content of the Mosaic Law is repeated again for the generation going up north that was about to enter Canaan under Joshua just before Moses died, as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. That is the section of the Bible that we call the Law.



You have to understand that the Jews from Mount Sinai until the time of Peter, when this vision happened, were under the Mosaic Law for 1,500 years. That is a long, long time. America is about 250 years old, and we look at our country as old. But think of being under a system for a millennia and a half—1,500 years.

Peter is going to be told here to violate the Mosaic Law. God is saying to Peter, in this vision, that the age of the Mosaic Law is over. If you understand that, then you understand why He had him stay at the home of a tanner at the end of Acts 9. This was someone that routinely violates the Mosaic Law by working with the carcasses of dead

animals. So God is breaking Peter away from Jewish legal tradition that spanned 1,500 years.

When the Nation of Israel received the Mosaic Law, they got all kinds of instructions about food, where God made distinctions between clean and unclean. "This animal over here is unclean; do not eat of it. This animal over here is clean; you can eat of it." Peter is going to be told, regarding the non-kosher, unclean animals, "Arise, kill, and eat."

*"A voice came to him, 'Get up, Peter, kill and eat!'" (Acts 10:13).*

He has three commands. Number one, get up; number two, kill; and number three, eat. What do you think Peter's response was? To slap God a high five and say, "This is great! I will do exactly what you said." No. Peter resists this, as you can imagine how a guy who has been under a completely different system with his people going back to Mount Sinai 1,500 years would resist that.

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

Let me give you some Scriptures, if I could, to show you where in the Mosaic Law certain animals were deemed unclean.

Given at Mount Sinai:

*"And so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the clean and the unclean" (Leviticus 10:10).*

*""You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or bird or by anything that creeps on the ground, which I have separated for you as unclean"" (Leviticus 20:25).*

In other words, if you eat the unclean, you are detestable unto the Lord—you have done what is detestable unto the Lord according to the Mosaic Law.

You see the prophet Ezekiel saying:

*"But I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth'" (Ezekiel 4:14).*

Ezekiel says, "I have kept the animal provisions pretty well."

In the Book of Daniel, when Daniel is a mere teenager, he was told to eat Nebuchadnezzar's food, which violated the Mosaic Law:

*"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8).*

You see this system that has been in place for 1,500 years, and you see God's top people, Ezekiel and Daniel, keeping it to a T. You have to understand that Ezekiel and Daniel are the top guys of their era. God told Ezekiel, "The people are going to go into captivity, and it really would not matter if Daniel, Noah, and Job were praying, they are still going to go into captivity" (Ezekiel 14:14, 20). Ezekiel, in so doing, is acknowledging that Daniel, his contemporary, was on par with Noah and Job. That is quite a lineup. When Daniel is saying, "I do not want to eat anything unclean," he is talking about his fastidiousness as a devout Jew, not to violate God's law; and so was Ezekiel.

All of a sudden, Peter sees this vision. He is shown some food that is unclean according to the Mosaic Law, and he hears a voice that says, "Arise, kill, and eat." He says, "Not so, Lord," even though he was hungry (Acts 10:10). He had an appetite, but he did not allow his appetite to cause him to violate what the Mosaic Law said not to do.

*"But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord'" (Acts 10:14).*

Is that not an oxymoron? An oxymoron is two ideas that are contradictory—jumbo shrimp, government intelligence, government efficiency, postal service, and my favorite example, Microsoft works—two ideas that do not always go together. Here is Peter saying to his Lord (in Greek "kyrios"), "Not so." That raises an interesting question: if he is your Lord, how can you tell Him no?

I think he recognizes who is giving this vision, the authority behind it, but he does not want to follow it. "Not so, Lord." It is a very interesting statement, because the doctrine of Lordship salvation says that if Jesus Christ is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all. They leave almost no room for a carnal Christian, rebellious Christian, disobedient Christian. They say if you are disobedient, then you are not a Christian. We would have to conclude then, that Peter was unsaved here. Peter, who is doing all this great work in the Book of Acts, leading the Jews to the Lord, Samaritans to the Lord, and now, the first Gentile to the Lord, the one who is given the keys to the Kingdom, the one on whose confession Jesus built the church, he is unsaved according to Lordship salvation.

That is what Lordship salvation is. It is like how today we have fake news—Lordship salvation is fake theology. It is not real theology. It is a belief in the minds of a lot of people. As with the angel of death, you look at the Bible and say, "Is this true or not?" It cannot be true. What makes a person a Christian is not his submission to the Lordship of Christ; what makes a person a Christian is that he has received as a free gift what Jesus did in their place. That makes him saved.

We do not teach Lordship salvation here. We do teach Lordship sanctification, Lordship growth. Growth is totally different from birth. You can be born and not be growing. It happens in the physical world constantly with malnutrition and whatever. You have people that are born, but they are having developmental problems. It is the same thing in the spiritual world. People are born, and you cannot be unborn. They are born again, but they are not growing the way they should because they are not submitting every area of their life to Christ. If a person is not submitting every area of their life to Christ, that is a developmental problem. It is not a problem of you not being a Christian.

The Lordship salvation people will quote 1 Corinthians 12:3:

*"Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).*

That is a test to determine if someone is speaking by the Spirit, not whether someone is born again by the Spirit. I can show you countless examples in the Bible. In fact, in our "Neo-Calvinism versus the Bible" series that we are doing on Sunday mornings, I will show you many passages of people who clearly are saved but were not submitted one hundred percent to the Lordship of Christ in daily life.

Do not get me wrong, submitting to the Lordship of Christ is important. We should do that, but the problem with Lordship salvation is that it uses a barometer to determine if someone has initially accepted Christ or not. The whole idea collapses by reading Acts 10 verse by verse.

Peter says, "Not so, Lord." He did not want to do what God said to do for religious reasons. So what does God do? God tells him again (Acts 10:15). He tells it to him three times.

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

"Second time" in Greek is the word "deuteros," where we get the word Deuteronomy, "Second Law." This was the repetition of the Law to the folks that came out of Mount Sinai, most of which died in the wilderness. God started to work with their children, and led them to the east in what is called the Transjordan. As they were poised to enter the Promised Land under Joshua, God restated the Law to them for that generation in what we call the Book of Deuteronomy—"nomos" law, Deuteronomy, Second Law. The Law is repackaged and restated for the benefit of that next generation. That is why it is called the Book of Deuteronomy. That is why the Greek uses the word "deuteros" "a second time" here.

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

"Peter, we are in a new age—a time called the church—where the Mosaic Law is being set aside. You are going to be under a brand new system called the Law of Christ, or the Law of the Holy Spirit. There is not going to be a distinction between clean and unclean animals anymore. You want to go have a steak? You go right ahead and have that steak. You want to have a ham sandwich? Help yourself. You are under a new system."

Jesus told us that the new system was coming many times in the Gospels:

*"Jesus said, 'Are you still lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that precede out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man'" (Matthew 15:16-20).*

In other words, Jesus is saying, "A new age of time is coming, when you are going to understand that it is not what man takes in that defiles him; what defiles him is what comes out of his heart."

*"And He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it goes because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?' (Thus He declared all foods clean.)" (Mark 7:18-19).*

This was not what the Mosaic Law said for 1,500 years. Jesus is talking about a time period that is coming, the age of the church, in which the dietary provisions of the Mosaic Law will be set aside. This is hard for a Jew to handle when you have been under the old system for so long. Paul, in his epistles, talks about this all the time. First Corinthians ten, verse 19.

*"What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, that an idol is anything?" (1 Corinthians 10:19).*

If you want to eat food sacrificed to idols, Daniel would not do it, but you can do it. The only thing Paul warns about is not to do it in the presence of someone who is offended by that, because then you are causing them to stumble. Do not use your freedom in a way that flaunts it in the presence of the brother with weaker knowledge.

It is like saying, "The Bible says I can drink alcohol. The Bible says, take a little wine for your upset stomach. What the Bible says is: do not be drunk with wine. It does not say never have wine." So does that mean you are to go into the presence of a recovering alcoholic and just pop open a cool one? No, because you would be flaunting your freedom in the presence of someone who is being imprisoned by what you are doing.

You have a lot of freedoms in this new system that we are under. But Paul is very clear that we should not use our freedom in a way that is detrimental to somebody else, particularly if they have a weaker understanding. You might win the theological argument, but that is not the point. We are called into a life of love and service to each other, so I do not use my freedom to destroy someone else.

I had to think through this because I had a roommate at one time who was a recovering alcoholic. If I drank this or that it would be damaging to him, even though biblically I probably had permission to do it. I tried to, through a learning curve, curtail my freedom because I was more interested in his development than exercising my rights all the time. Even though the right is there, that is the only limitation Paul puts on this.

*"I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"*  
(Romans 14:14).

*"Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ"*  
(Colossians 2:16-17).

If you want to celebrate the Jewish feast days, you can do that. If you do not want to celebrate the Jewish feast days, you do not have to do that; it is a matter of personal conscience. The Jewish feast day has come from the Mosaic Law, which has been set aside in the church.

*"Men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it was received with gratitude"* (1 Timothy 4:3-4).

Do you want to eat kosher food, or unkosher food? Go right ahead and do it with a thankful heart. But be careful about doing it in the presence of the weaker brother who does not really have the full theological understanding that you have, because you could be putting an offense in front of him that is unnecessary—that is the only limitation.

God repeats the vision:

*"This happened three times"* (Acts 10:16).

Why did it have to happen three times? Because Peter and his people have been under another system for 1,500 years. God had to prepare Peter's heart by having him stay at the home of a tanner, which we saw earlier in Acts 9:43. Peter is still unconvinced, and God repeats it in this vision three times.



Why three times?

*"On the evidence of two or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness"*  
(Deuteronomy 7:6).

It is an ancient principle of God: If you want to put someone to death under the Mosaic Law, you must have your two to three witnesses. How about an elder who falls into sin? "I saw elder so-and-so down at the bar, and he was really loaded and intoxicated and stumbling around. He needs to be removed from eldership." Do you have your two to three witnesses? "No, I saw him and I do not know the other people in the room." We cannot accept that then, because the Bible says two to three witnesses. It is a principle of God: Let a matter be confirmed by two to three witnesses. That is why God is repeating this to Peter three times.

*"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses"* (1 Timothy 5:19).

*"...and immediately the object [the sheet] was taken up into the sky"* (Acts 10:16).

The Greek is "anambano," which is the same verb used to describe the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1:22:

*"Beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up ["anambano"] from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection"* (Acts 1:22).

Just as Jesus was taken up to heaven, Peter saw this vision. It was repeated, and he was given a three-fold command. It is repeated several times by the Lord, and then the vision is over and the sheet goes right back to the heaven from which it came.

What is happening here? Can I use the D word? We are in a new dispensation. What is a dispensation? It is a translation from Ephesians 1:10. In the King James Bible the word "dispensation" is from the Greek "oikonomia," where we get the word "economy." It is a compound word coming from "oikos," house, and "nomos," rule—"house rule" or "house law." What are dispensations? Dispensations are times in history when God governs through certain principles. Then the principles change, and once the principles change, you are in a new "oikonomia" or dispensation.

The plan of salvation, personal salvation, never changes. The plan of salvation is always through faith alone in Christ alone. Old Testament figures looking forward to a Messiah that would come, not knowing His name were saved on credit because it had not been paid for yet. We, in New Testament times, are looking backward to a Messiah that came. We know His name—Jesus Christ. We are not saved on credit because it

has been paid for, but it is always through personal faith alone in Christ alone, that personal salvation is accomplished. That is a consistency throughout the changes of rules that will always be the same.

If someone is telling you that they were saved by works in the Old Testament, and they are going to be saved by works in the Tribulation period by not taking the mark of the beast or doing some kind of work, then that is false doctrine. People are never saved by works; people are always saved on the basis of personal faith alone in Christ alone. Old Testament saints looking forward, New Testament saints looking backward, but the principle of "sola fide," salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, is always the same, no matter what age of time people are living in.

Having said that, there are radical changes in the outworking of God's purposes. Those are the seven dispensations. The first is the dispensation of innocence, because things obviously changed in Genesis 3, did they not? Death became a reality, pregnancy became difficult, and man had to work to survive, because man fell. The dispensation changed from innocence to conscience, where man was told to live consistent with his conscience.

That did not go too well. Because every inclination of man's heart became perpetually wicked (Genesis 6:5), God sent the flood. That led to the dispensation of human government, where God governed people by human government. Every dispensation ends in failure. Adam and Eve failed in innocence by eating from the forbidden tree; the dispensation of conscience failed when man's conscience became seared as by a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2). Pre-flood, every inclination of his thoughts became continually wicked (Genesis 6:5).

Man failed under the dispensation of government because they tried to build a stairway to heaven at the Tower of Babel. With every dispensation, there is a failure; God brings in a judgment, and then you move into the higher dispensation.

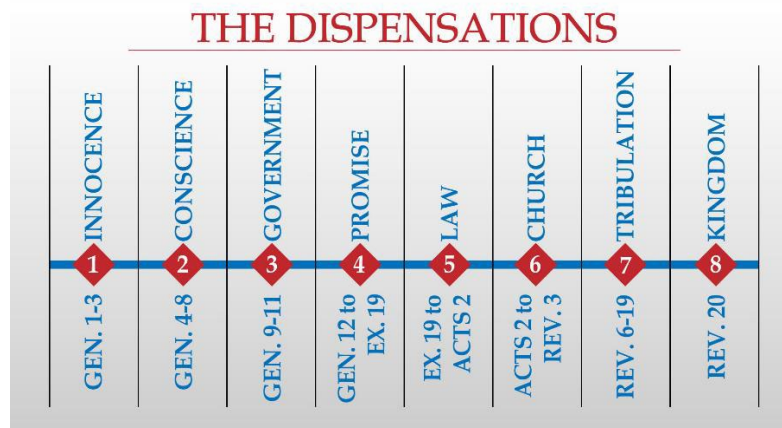
Next, God governed Israel under promise. That failed, so God put them under Law, which is the longest dispensation in the Bible. It stretches from Mount Sinai to Acts 1. That dispensation went on for 1,500 years. That is what Peter was used to. Jesus, Peter, and Paul are all saying that this age is over. We are in a new dispensation now called the Church Age, which started in Acts 2, where we are not governed by the Law of Moses anymore; we are governed by a different system called the Law of the Spirit or the Law of Christ (Romans 8:2; Galatians 6:2).

We have been living now, for 2,000 years, in dispensation number six, but our dispensation is not going to be successful either. Paul talks over and over again about apostasy of the church in the last days, how the church will leave the truth, and the only thing that will prevent the church from totally embarrassing itself will be the Rapture.

Following the Tribulation period, which I think is a completion of the dispensation of law. There is a missing week there, according to Daniel's prophecies, and then there will be

a dispensation of the Kingdom Age, the Millennium, which will end in failure. There is going to be a revolt at the end, and those involved in the revolt, living under perfect conditions are as the sand of the seashore (Revelation 20:7-9).

That dispensation ends, and finally, God says, "No more dispensations." We are moved into the eternal state where man is not being tested anymore. Thank God for that. We have flunked every test, so no more tests, and we go off into the eternal state.



A dispensationalist is not somebody who brings this package to the Bible. I have not brought this to the Bible; I have gotten this from the Bible because I am observing the changes of rules that are happening in biblical history. What is happening here in Acts 10 is a transition from law to the church. That is what this whole thing is about, and Peter, like most Jews who have lived under the prior system for 1,500 years, is having a tough time with the change.

Father, we are grateful for Your truth, grateful for Your Word, grateful for the Book of Acts. Thank you, Lord, for real world examples You have given us of these people that You use, who sometimes have a hard time with things that You revealed, but You used them anyway in spite of their imperfections. That gives us hope for our own lives. Help us to be good stewards of this section of history. We will be careful to give You all the praise and the glory. We ask these things in Jesus' name. All God's people said, Amen.