

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for September 15, 2013

The Vision to Peter
Acts 10:9-16

God prepares the church for the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles by revealing to Peter his freedom from the Old Testament dietary laws.

1. The report of Peter (10:9-10)

The sixth hour was noon, which was a time when more pious Jews would pray in addition to the scheduled 9:00 am and 3:00 pm prayer times.

The “trance” that Peter fell into is another expression for “vision” (cf. Acts 10:17) and is used to simply mean the state of mind of a person to whom God was bringing revelation (cf. Acts 22:17).

2. The revelation to Peter (10:11-13)

By residing with Simon the tanner, Peter was willing to go beyond the restrictions of the Pharisees regarding contact with those considered unclean. However, he was not yet willing to go beyond the restrictions of the Old Testament Law.

There were three types of creatures, (1) animals; (2) reptiles; and (3) birds. Included among these creatures were those considered by the Old Testament to be “unclean” (Acts 10:14). The Old Testament Law included specific and detailed prohibitions on eating certain things (Leviticus 11:2-47; 20:25; Deuteronomy 14:3-21).

The divine instruction included Peter to personally kill (cf. Leviticus 17:10-14) and eat. It was not sufficient for Peter to simply allow Gentiles the freedom from the dietary laws.

3. The response of Peter (10:14-16)

Peter’s response was an emphatic, double negative refusal (10:14), which stands in contrast to his use of the term “Lord.”

Jesus had taught on things clean and unclean in Mark 7:14-23, and Mark specifically notes that Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19). This cleansing by God is strongly reinforced in Acts 10:15 with a command to Peter to stop thinking the way he had.

Peter had to be instructed by the voice three times, bringing to mind Peter’s three-fold denial of Christ (Luke 22:54-62).

Also brought to mind is Jesus' three-fold question to Peter, "do you love me," and the command to "tend My sheep" which followed (John 21:15-17). John 10:16 shows that these sheep include the Gentiles.

The repetitions show the importance of this message at this point in time. As Peter went to the Gentiles, he did not demand that they embrace the Old Testament Law. Years later he opposed those who believed the Gentiles must observe the Law (Acts 15:1-11).

Acts 10:28 shows that Peter understood this vision as having a broader application for his ministry to the Gentiles than strictly food.

In Christ we are released from the Old Testament Law (Romans 7:1-6; 10:4). We are to go to those without the Law as under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:20-21) and are to eat whatever is set before us (1 Corinthians 10:27).

If God had Peter set aside the Old Testament Laws that God Himself created for the sake of the Gentiles, how much more should we set aside our personal preferences?

May God give us the proper understanding of our freedom in Christ, so that we may serve others as ambassadors for Christ.