



Portion:

Title:

SCRIPTURES

- Acts 10-12
- Ephesians 2:10
- Joel 2:28-29

PREPARED BEFOREHAND

- Orchestrated to Perfection
- Breaking the Religious Spirit
- A New Era of Persecution

Peter is not the only one you know. It's the human dilemma—obstinance, stubbornness, resistance. It's difficult to alter engrained thoughts, persistent tendencies and incessant behaviors. You might think you can just relax. All it takes to change the old man into the new man is to be born again. However, there is ample evidence that is far from real. The truth is that being born again grants you access to all the resources necessary to root out enmeshed beliefs, break old habits, and make better choices. Yes, access granted but transformation denied, unless you are willing to do the work.

That is why we are instructed to take every thought captive, to make them obedient to Christ. That is why we are told to renew our minds—it's where the transformation begins. Actions follow mindsets. And that is why Paul was open about his struggles, and by inference we are cautioned about the challenges we all face. At times, I still do what I shouldn't and I don't do what I should.

No, Peter and Paul are not the only ones, but in Peter we have the perfect example, the quintessential case study. Even as a man who enjoyed walking in the inner circle of Christ, one who witnessed His persecution, torture, and then crucifixion at the hands of the religious elite with all their hypocrisy, and had himself faced persecution as their captive—Peter still had erroneous religious beliefs baked into his psyche. He was sure that he would have nothing to do with Gentiles because Yahweh wanted nothing to do with Gentiles. He definitely did not inherit that mindset from his Jewish Scriptures; they teach quite the opposite. Peter, however, is about to become the pioneer of the proper perspective; you will not avoid the Gentiles, rather you will go to the Gentiles with this message; “Yahweh is not prejudice; Y’shua is for everyone!”

Peter was holding on to his engrained thoughts, persistent religious tendencies and incessant behaviors. And he would have never ministered to the Gentiles if Yahweh did not intervene. God initiated Peter’s transformation by first exposing his enmeshed beliefs. That helped him break old habits and make better choices. And God used prophecy to soften his sclerotic mentality... “Old men shall dream dreams; young men shall see visions.” Yahweh gave Peter a vision and this was its ultimate fruit. “I’m God’s work of art. I’ve been created by God and empowered in Christ to obey His Word and the specific calling on my life. This calling was prepared

*for me beforehand with the expressed purpose that I walk in it.”
And so he did; he went to the gentiles and told them, “Yahweh is
not prejudice; Y’shua is for everyone!” God has prepared dreams
and visions for you as well—it is time for you to walk in them!*

PROPHETIC SEED:

““And it shall come to pass afterward That **I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh**; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, **Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.**” Joel 2:28 NKJV

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God **prepared beforehand** that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10 NKJV

PROPHETIC FRUIT:

“Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, **he fell into a trance**” Acts 10:10 NKJV

“Arise therefore, go down and **go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.**”” Acts 10:20 NKJV

“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.**”” Acts 10:22 NKJV

“Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. **But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.** Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?”” Acts 10:28-29 NKJV

“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, **“Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”**” Acts 11:18 NKJV

Let’s Set the Scene: Portion in a blurb

Introduction

Last week in [Instant...](#), we witnessed the most shocking and abrupt about-face imaginable. It’s immediate, comprehensive and permanent! Our first introduction to Paul, the would-be most prolific writer of the New Testament; the formulator of written Christian theology and doctrine; and one of the greatest leaders in Church history; was as Saul, its greatest enemy. Last week we floated the idea that through his relationship with Gamaliel, his mentor and teacher, it was highly probable that Saul was present at all the recent trials in the Sanhedrin we’ve read about: Y’shua’s in Matthew 26, the previous two trials involving the apostles in Acts 4

and 5, and the one against Stephen in Acts 6 and 7. It seems very possible that his disdain and visceral hatred for Y'shua-followers came from personal experience and those emotions fueled his continued persecution at the start of Acts 8.

But, before we encountered what might be the most dramatic turn-around in the Holy Scriptures, we joined Philip preaching and bringing miracles to Samaria. His testimony was so compelling that Simon, a famous sorcerer in the city, had a true conversion. And in order to fully appreciate this key moment in Bible history, you must recognize that Philip was only in Samaria because the disciples of Y'shua, other than the original apostles, were fleeing Jerusalem to avoid persecution from the likes of Saul.

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem the apostles were notified about the work and effectiveness of Philip and they sent Peter and John to Samaria to investigate. They introduced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the laying on of hands, to all those who had recently been baptized in the name of the Lord. When Simon, the recently converted sorcerer, saw the Spirit's power in motion, he offered to pay Peter and John for a little download for himself. It came across as if he was hoping to add this feature to his bag of magic tricks. Boy did Peter lay into him—in exactly the way we'd come to expect from him. The rebuke was scathing and Simon immediately repented.

At that time, Philip was prompted by the Lord to move on from there and on his journey he encountered a eunuch from Ethiopia. Philip was directed by the Holy Spirit to approach the man who he found reading from the scroll of Isaiah (what you would know today as Isaiah 53:7-8). The eunuch was sure he could not really understand what he was reading on his own, nor to whom Isaiah is referring, and Philip stepped in to explain. The outcome was wonderful; the man came to believe Y'shua is the Messiah and Philip baptized him right away. Immediately Philip literally disappeared from there in a nanosecond, as he was whisked away by the Spirit, and he reappeared in another city.

Then our attention turned back to Saul who was on a mission to persecute Christians. He was given authority by the high priest to travel to the synagogues of Damascus and to arrest all who had converted and to bring them bound to Jerusalem for judgment. But God had a different plan for Saul. He was about to be smacked into another universe. Saul was stopped in his tracks by an encounter with Y'shua Himself! He was the one arrested, knocked to the ground, blinded by the light, and chastised harshly by the audible voice of Y'shua. Saul's immediate response, and I mean immediate, was to change course. "Who are You, Lord?" And, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" It was that definitive!

The Lord commanded him to go into the city and that he would receive further instructions. He obeyed instantly! The men with him saw nothing but did hear the same audible voice. It's obvious that Saul was previously blinded to the truth about Y'shua, but here, when he got up off the ground, he was is literally blind. The men with him had to lead him by the hand to Damascus, where he fasted three days and sat sightless. How interesting! Saul had a devious plan to enter Damascus and God's plan for Saul was indeed that he go to Damascus, but for a very different reason. Man makes plans, but God decides his steps!

Simultaneously, a man named Ananias was given a vision about Saul and that he would be coming to him to "receive his sight." Ananias knew Saul's reputation and he was reasonably apprehensive. But, the Lord assured him it is all good, that He had big plans to use Saul and that He would show Saul that he's been chosen for both great ministry and great suffering. Ananias obeyed and met with Saul, touched him, and immediately the scales of blindness fell from his eyes; he was encountered by the Holy Spirit and was then baptized.

After Saul recovered from the fast and from his dramatic experience, his intention in Damascus shifted from persecution to preaching. He both confounded the Jews and was rejected by them; nevertheless he did prove to them that Y'shua is the Messiah. He

proved it but they wouldn't accept it, so Saul went from an enemy of the church to an enemy of the Jews, who then plotted to kill him. It's stunning how, in an instant, Saul found himself on the other side of the "gavel" and how immediate his persecution began, that which God had just revealed to Ananias. *"For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* Saul was forced to escape under the cover of darkness and literally under the cover of a basket, and he returned to Jerusalem, for the first time as an overt friend to "Christianity." Understandably, the people who knew his reputation were apprehensive and scared, but Barnabas took a risk and brought Saul to the apostles to whom he related his testimony. Saul then disputed with the Hellenists in Jerusalem, over the messiahship of Y'shua, and they too wanted to kill him, so he fled the city and headed toward his hometown of Tarsus. Saul's first visit to Jerusalem as a believer in Y'shua was short lived, but the Church continued to grow. He'll be back in Jerusalem a few more times on his journey to spread the Gospel.

Then our attention turned back to Peter. What was he doing? He was in Lydda, a city near Joppa, and we watched him heal Aeneas, a man bedridden for eight years. The miracle turned many people to the faith. Then, over in Joppa a devout woman named Tabitha fell ill and died. Disciples in Joppa knew that Peter was in a nearby city and they sent for him. Peter immediately went to Joppa and God

used him to raise this devout woman from death to life. The testimony drew many more people to the Lord. Peter stayed for a while in Joppa with a man named Simon. This set the stage for yet another about-face!

This week the Church takes its first turn towards the Gentiles. Sure we know that Saul, who had his great about-face last week, will eventually, as Paul, focus a large portion of his ministry towards the nations, but Peter is first to jump in the water. This will not be an easy task, and impetuous Peter will not go quietly. As usual with him, it's going to take a supernatural experience to move him in the right direction.

We begin first with the Gentile side of the equation. Cornelius was a God fearing Roman Centurion in Caesarea. This means, although not a complete convert to Judaism, he was worshiping and obeying the one true God, he and his household. An angel comes to him and tells him to send for Peter who is in nearby Joppa. "Peter has something to tell you."

Meanwhile, Peter is simultaneously having his famous vision with the unclean animals on a blanket. (Just like we saw with Saul and Ananias in Acts 9, God inspired both men about one another simultaneously.) Peter is told three times to kill and eat and three times he rejects the idea of consuming unclean animals. Why three times? Because Peter can be a bit thickheaded and it takes three

times for him to recognize that the vision is not at all about food. “Peter, don’t call anything unclean that I call clean,” God says. And right as he comes out of his trance, three messengers from Cornelius arrive with the invitation to his house in Caesarea. It’s perfect timing because had they arrived before Peter’s vision, he would have rejected the invitation, not believing he should visit an “unclean household.” Peter thinks, “If God called Cornelius to send for me, then I guess I should go and not call anything unclean that He calls clean.”

Here’s the thing; Peter was clear that the vision was not about food, so why do Christians worldwide and throughout Church history insist on using Peter’s vision as proof God changed His mind on biblical dietary laws? In short: it wasn’t, and He didn’t, so you shouldn’t. And when Peter finally meets with Cornelius, he makes it definitive. “I’m here because God prepared to send me, and it’s clear that simultaneously He had you send for me. And it’s also clear that my tradition would have prevented me from coming, had I not had the vision and revelation that I should never call a man common or unclean whom God has made clean, no matter what their religious background or national heritage.” So, just in case you still thought the vision was about food, the matter has now been settled, as Peter interprets the vision for us. (In other words, he DOES NOT leave it for you to interpret)... “I should not call

ANYTHING unclean that God calls clean means I should never call a MAN common or unclean whom God has made clean! The vision was given to remove my prejudice against Gentiles." "Let me also elaborate for a moment about our tradition," Peter says. "The tradition that we should not visit or fellowship with Gentiles, is just that, a manmade tradition. The Torah teaches the exact opposite. We were called to be a light to the Gentiles and it took this wild vision to break through my extreme prejudice." I pray whatever prejudice you have carried all these years, about the interpretation of these passages, is now also gone!

Cornelius tells Peter that God told him that Peter had something important to share, and Peter does... "So, why have I come to this household? It's simple. God is not prejudice (even though we have been); the Messiah of Israel is for every person of any nation, as long as they repent and believe. And that Messiah is Y'shua of Nazareth. Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive the remission of sins." Well, that is all the entire household of Cornelius had to hear. They all believe, his family and friends; they encounter the Holy Spirit and are baptized in the name of Y'shua.

Then Peter must return to Jerusalem to explain to his Jewish brothers what happened in Caesarea and that Y'shua is for everyone, not just Israel. They have a religious response at first, but the testimony is so compelling that they quickly come into

agreement and rejoice. "God is not prejudiced; we should not call any man unclean that God calls clean."

Then our attention turns to Saul for a bit. Barnabas, who already took a chance on Saul when he visited Jerusalem for the first time after his conversion, is ready to take another chance. He goes to Tarsus, Saul's hometown, to fetch Saul to bring him to Antioch for ministry. Saul had moved back to Tarsus after he was chased from Jerusalem shortly after the first time he visited post-conversion. Now Barnabas brings him to Antioch where they work in ministry together for a whole year. They even successfully managed some of the resources collected to support those in Judea.

Finally our attention turns to Herod Agrippa. He becomes the first official Roman enemy of the Church. He has James, the brother of John killed and he arrests Peter during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and puts him in a Roman prison. He intends to put Peter on trial after the Passover holiday, and we should expect the outcome will be similar to James'. However, Peter is supernaturally freed from his chains and released from prison by an angel and his testimony encourages the many who were fervently praying for him. It does not go so well for the prison guards who Herod has executed for insubordination. In addition, it ends very badly for Herod as well. He accepts worship as if he is God and Yahweh has him eaten to death by worms.

Acts 10

Cornelius and the Angel (Acts 10:1-8)

1. The Lord Instructs Cornelius to Send for Peter

- (a) Cornelius was a Roman soldier in charge of 100 men in a regiment of 600 men.
- (b) He was a devout man who feared the God of the Jews, prayed always, and sought to live in obedience to God's commands, along with his family.
- (c) An angel appears to Cornelius and as expected, it frightened him, but he knew it was from the Lord.
- (d) His response is admirable: "What is it, Lord?"
- (e) The angel assures him that God has heard his prayers and gives him instructions...
- (f) Send men to Joppa to fetch Peter. I've been preparing him for this moment. He's staying with Simon the tanner. He will know what to tell you to do.
- (g) Cornelius immediately sends two of his servants and a soldier who serves some of his personal needs, but more importantly one who has similar faith as his.
- (h) He explains their assignment and then they leave for Joppa.

Peter's Controversial Vision (Acts 10:9-16)

- #### 2. Peter is about to experience a complete about-face. (like Paul did in Chapter 9)—see [Instant...](#)

- (a) Remember, Peter was in Joppa to heal Tabitha and he was staying with Simon the tanner.
- (b) As the delegate gets close to Joppa the next day, Peter went up to the roof to pray.
- (c) He felt hungry and seemed to zone out.
- (d) Then he had a vision of a giant spread of wild animals, bugs, reptiles, rodents, and birds coming down from the sky on a large blanket suspended on four sides.
- (e) He was instructed to get up, slaughter something and eat it—he was hungry you know!
- (f) The inference here is that none of the creatures represented are fit to eat (clean, kosher) according to the Torah, so Peter vehemently rejects the invitation.
- (g) In his entire life as an obedient Jew he has never eaten anything forbidden by law (unclean food that is common for pagans to consume.)
- (h) Hint: common is also a designation that distinguishes something from being holy (set-apart).
- (i) Peter then receives a clue that God is NOT even talking about food. (Hint: he is about to receive an invitation to visit a gentile's home.)
- (j) He is told that whatever God has cleansed is no longer common. (Whatever He makes holy is holy!)

- (k) Peter tends to be a bit obstinate as you know, so this exchange must be repeated three times before he gets it.

Peter is Summoned to Caesarea (Acts 10:17-23)

- 3. We cannot assume that this vision (out of context) is God's way of releasing humanity from His prescribed food laws in the Torah. (Although you'd think it was, judging from 2000 years of doctrinal teachings based on Peter's vision.)
 - (a) Even Peter does NOT assume that is what the vision is about. He *"wondered within himself what this vision meant."*
 - (b) At that moment, Cornelius' men arrive looking for Peter and the Holy Spirit tells Peter that three men are there to see him and to trust them and go with them because God sent them.
 - (c) Peter meets them and inquires about why they've come to see him.
 - (d) They tell Peter that Cornelius sent them by divine instruction, which jives with what the Spirit just told him.
 - (e) "Cornelius is a righteous God-fearing man with a good reputation and he was told by God to send for you and to invite you to his home because you have something to tell him."
 - (f) Peter invites the messengers to stay overnight and the next day they leave Joppa for Caesarea.

Peter Meets with Cornelius (Acts 10:24-33)

4. They arrive in Caesarea the next day and Cornelius gathers his family and close friends to listen to Peter.
 - (a) When Cornelius sees Peter he bows, as if to worshiped him, and Peter quickly corrects him. "Don't worship me Cornelius; like you, I'm just a man."
 - (b) As a large contingent of Gentiles gather, Peter makes a very telling statement. He shares this about the current state of Judaism, one which cannot be supported by Torah.
 - (c) Here's a paraphrase of what he said...
 - 1) "It's against Torah for a Jew to have a gathering with or even visit a Gentile." (This is not only untrue, it is the exact opposite of Torah. Israel was commanded to be a light to the nations!)
 - 2) "However, the extenuating circumstance here is that God prepared me for this 'special' calling with a bizarre series of visions, and He told me that I must come here, while simultaneously He was telling Cornelius to send for me."
 - 3) "And here is the big take away. I was wondering what the vision meant that I had three times. It was never about food. Food was an object lesson, serving as a metaphor for what was unclean."
 - 4) "What God was doing was breaking through my wrong mindset about Gentiles, the mindset that would have us

Jews believe that “It’s against Torah for a Jew to have a gathering with or even visit a Gentile.” That’s been wrong all along and the vision was God’s way of showing us that “I should never call a man common or unclean whom God has made clean, no matter what their religious background or national heritage. That is why when your men came to get me, I came immediately without objection.”

(d) So, let’s get down to business, why did you send for me?

(e) Cornelius tells his testimony...

- 1) “Four days ago, while fasting and in prayer, an angel visited me and told me that God was listening. He told me to send for Peter in Joppa and that he was staying with Simon, a tanner.” (And we know that Peter was “positioned” with Simon because God, the Master Chess Player, had previously sent him to Joppa to raise Tabitha!)
- 2) “He also told me that when Peter comes he will have something to tell me. And that was it.”
- 3) “He didn’t tell me what that was, so when you ask, ‘Why did you send for me?’ That’s all I got!”
- 4) “I followed the angel’s instructions immediately, and, Peter, it’s good that you did also.”

- 5) “So, we are all here waiting to hear what God has commanded you to tell us!”

Peter Preaches to the Household of Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43)

5. Peter explains (the short and concise Gospel of Salvation):
- (a) The revelation that God is not prejudice explains why God sent me to you.
 - (b) It does not matter what nation you are from, if you fear God, repent, and live righteously, you will find His favor.
 - (c) Sure, the word of God originally came through Israel, but that was all to lead to Y’shua, the Lord and Savior of all mankind, not just Israel.
 - (d) It’s the message we were preaching in Jerusalem and when we got driven out it spread throughout Judea.
 - (e) It began when John baptized Y’shua up in Galilee and the Holy Spirit descended on Him and He was filled with the power of God.
 - (f) He went around healing the sick and taking dominion over demons and we witnessed the whole thing.
 - (g) The religious elite had Him executed on a cross and His Father raised Him from the grave after three days and three nights (as prophesied).
 - (h) So many people saw Him after the resurrection, but He was revealed only to those God wished.

- (i) We personally shared meals with Him after He rose from the grave.
- (j) And He commissioned us to spread the good news of His life, death and resurrection to all people, and to be sure they understand that God gave Y'shua the authority to judge the world.
- (k) Here is the bottom Cornelius. When you said, "We are all here waiting to hear what God has commanded you to tell us," this is it! "THROUGH Y'SHUA'S NAME, WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL RECEIVE REMISSION OF SINS."

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48)

- 6. As Peter is explaining how God is not prejudice, the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles and they start speaking in tongues and glorifying God.
 - (a) See [To Be Continued...](#) for a complete explanation on the gift of tongues.
 - (b) The Jews watching are amazed that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, just as they had.
 - (c) Peter then sees the next logical step is to baptize these people in water in the name of Y'shua!
 - (d) Cornelius and his company request for Peter stay a few days before he departs.

Acts 11

Peter defends his relationship with the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18)

7. The religious spirit is not limited to the Jews who don't believe.

(a) Peter returns to Jerusalem from his journey.

- 1) Remember, Peter left Jerusalem in Acts 8:14-25 to see what Philip was doing in Samaria and he brought an encounter of the Holy Spirit to all those who had just been born again.
- 2) That is when Simon the sorcerer had offered to pay for the power of the Holy Spirit and he was strongly rebuked by Peter.
- 3) In Acts 9:32-35, Peter moved on from Samaria to Lydda, a city eleven miles southeast of Joppa, where he healed Aeneas.
- 4) And then in Acts 9:36:43 he went to Joppa and raised Dorcas (Tabitha) from the dead. He was having a miraculous trip, but it was about to get even more exciting than raising the dead.
- 5) And we just saw in chapter 10 that he had visions and an encounter with the Gentiles that proved to him that Y'shua, the Messiah of Israel, was for all nations.

- (b) Now Peter is back in Jerusalem and news that he had preached the word of God to the Gentiles had reached Jerusalem before his return.
- (c) Yes, even in the Church, all of whom are Jews (those of the circumcision) up to that moment, the religious spirit is alive and well.
- (d) They are not happy Peter brought Christ to the Gentiles, but Peter explains and recounts for them his step-by-step testimony:
 - 1) I had a vision three times in Joppa, and it meant, "*What God has cleansed you must not call common.*"
 - 2) The vision was not about the animals on the sheets, but about the Gentiles to whom I was called to preach.
 - 3) My very own interpretation of the visions was specific: "... *God has shown me that I should **not call any man common or unclean.***" Acts 10:28
- (e) Then Peter tells them about the testimony of Cornelius that had happened simultaneously in Caesarea, and what led him to accept the invitation to Cornelius' home.
- (f) He sent servants to me because an angel told him that I had a message for him. They arrived immediately after my blanket vision; it was all in perfect alignment as only God can do.

- (g) You see, I wouldn't have gone to a house full of Gentiles (even one like Cornelius' which was filled with people wanting to worship our God—those who were God-fearers), unless I already had the supernatural revelation, “...*that I should **not call any man** common or unclean, that what God has cleansed I must not call common!*”
- (h) And let's be honest; where did we even come up with the religious mindset that what we have is not for the Gentiles? It's written all throughout the Torah and the prophets that we are to evangelize the nations and to be a light unto the Gentiles. It's just a religious spirit that's been holding us back.
- (i) So, the visions made it clear I was to go with them to see Cornelius, and I did so with six witnesses. When I brought them the message of Y'shua, all of Cornelius' family and friends received Christ and the Holy Spirit fell upon them (as it did us at Pentecost).
- (j) The whole thing reminded Peter of what Y'shua said about John. 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
- (k) Here is the bottom line; if God intends to give the same gift to Gentiles, who am I to stand in the way.
- (l) Thankfully, Peter breaks through their religious spirit and they glorified God for what He is doing!

Barnabas and Saul Unite in Ministry (Acts 11:19-26)

8. Barnabas takes another chance on Saul
 - (a) Those who were scattered in the persecution in Jerusalem, especially after Stephen's execution, passed through Phoenicia and went as far north as Antioch, and even over to the Island of Cyprus.
 - (b) They focussed on preaching to only the Jews.
 - (c) However, in Antioch there were men who came from Cyprus, which is approximately 255 miles (400km) off the coast of Antioch, and from Cyrene in Libya, North Africa which was approximately 1500 miles (2400km) from Antioch.
 - (d) They spoke to the Hellenists in Antioch about Y'shua, and God used the Hellenists to bring many of those visitors to faith in Christ.
 - (e) News of these conversions reached Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to Antioch.
 - (f) Barnabas is "the son of encouragement," a faithful man full of the Holy Spirit.
 - (g) He finds God's grace in full swing and he encourages them to purposely continue to seek God wholeheartedly.
 - (h) More and more converts came to faith and then Barnabas sets out for Tarsus to seek Saul.

- (i) Remember, Barnabas was the one who took a chance on Saul when Saul showed up in Jerusalem, shortly after his conversion and after he was chased from Damascus.
- (j) Saul was also chased from Jerusalem on his first visit post-conversion, and he headed home to Tarsus (see Acts 9).
- (k) Tarsus is in Turkey, further north (and then west) of Antioch.
- (l) Barnabas seeks Saul in Tarsus and brings him to Antioch where they ministered together for an entire year.
- (m) It was at that time in Antioch that followers of Y'shua were first labeled Christians.

Financial Relief Sent to Judea (Acts 11:27-30)

- 9. A prophet from Jerusalem came to Antioch and predicted that a famine was coming.
 - (a) The disciples in Antioch sent resources down to Judea (and Jerusalem) with Barnabas and Saul as preparation.
 - (b) Remember they were using resources from Jerusalem up to that moment

Acts 12

Herod's Violence against the Church & Peter's Arrest (Acts 12:1-4)

- 10. Herod (Agrippa I) gets in on the action.

- (a) He is the grandson of Herod the Great (the one responsible for the massacre of the innocents at the time of Y'shua's birth).
- (b) We've gone from the Jews harassing the Church, to the Church harassing the Church, now to Rome harassing the Church.
- (c) Herod Agrippa is responsible for killing James the brother of John. James becomes the second martyr and the first of the original twelve to be killed for his faith.
- (d) Herod sees that his actions please the Jews (those who do not believe Y'shua is the Messiah). He is following in the footsteps of Herod Antipas (the son of Herod the Great) who was ruling at the time of Y'shua's crucifixion.
- (e) All the Roman leaders wished to please the Jews in some way—to keep them from rebelling and rioting.
- (f) In as much as the killing of James pleased the Jews, Herod Agrippa arrests Peter during the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- (g) He places Peter in prison (his 3rd time in prison, first time in a Roman prison).
- (h) He is heavily guarded by four squads of soldiers.
- (i) Herod's intent is to keep him in prison until the Feast is done and then bring him to trial after the Passover.

Peter Freed from Prison (Acts 12:5-19)

11. Peter has been incarcerated before, but this is his first time as a prisoner of Rome.
- (a) Other believers are in ongoing prayer for him as the situation is dire, considering what just happened to James.
 - (b) But, the night before Herod is to bring him out of prison to stand trial, an angel appears to Peter as a bright light, while he slept in chains between two guards.
 - (c) The angel wakes him by striking his side, as the chains fall from his wrists, and tells him to get up and prepare himself to run out of there quickly.
 - (d) Peter was not even sure if it was real or if he was dreaming.
 - (e) Nevertheless, he is led past two guard posts and through an iron gate that opened on its own.
 - (f) He finds himself in the city and then the angel disappears.
 - (g) At that point he realizes that it is real and that he has just been freed from what Herod was about to do to him.
 - (h) In an effort to please the Jews, it is likely Herod would have done to Peter what he just did to James.
 - (i) Peter finds his way to where the believers are gathered praying and when he knocks, the girl who answers is so shocked that she runs back inside to inform the others, before she even opens the door to let him inside.

- (j) They don't believe her anyway; they think she is losing it!
- (k) She insists and they relent, believing she is likely seeing an angel.
- (l) When they investigate, they find Peter has been supernaturally freed from prison and they are stunned.
- (m) Peter tells them how it all happened and asks they go inform James and the other apostles.
 - 1) This is the other James (as we know that James the brother of John had been martyred).
 - 2) This James is the leader of the Church in Jerusalem, Jesus' next younger brother and the author of James.
 - 3) He is known as Apostle James the Less. His predominant place of residence is in Jerusalem as implied in Galatians 1:18-19... Paul writing: *"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother."*
- (n) Peter leaves and heads out. Meanwhile, the next morning chaos breaks out with the soldiers because when Herod asked for Peter to be brought for trial, they had no idea what happened to him.
- (o) Herod has them executed for insubordination.
- (p) Peter leaves Judea for Caesarea, where he stayed for a while.

- (q) This is the last we see of Peter in Acts, until his appearance in Acts 15 for the Jerusalem Council.

Herod's Violent Death (Acts 12:20-24)

12. Herod Agrippa was not happy.

- (a) The people of Tyre and Sidon made friends with Blastus, the king's personal aid and friend.
- (b) They just wanted to live in peace as they were dependent on Herod's food supply.
- (c) Herod shows up in his royal garments and gives a speech. And the people pander to him... *"The voice of a god and not of a man!"*
- (d) Herod's acceptance of praise ends very badly for him, as instantly he is stuck down, eaten by worms and dies. (Notice that he is eaten alive; that is what kills him. As opposed to dying and then being consumed by worms.)
- (e) Why? He insisted on glorifying himself and not Yahweh.

First Mission Complete (Acts 12:25)

13. Barnabas and Saul are about to become official...

- (a) Meanwhile, Barnabas and Saul (and John Mark) had been sent on a mission to feed people in need in Acts 11:30.
- (b) Now they are back from Jerusalem having fulfilled their first assignment.

ORCHESTRATED TO PERFECTION

1. Peter in Joppa (Part II) see [Instant...](#) for Part I

A. Perfectly Coordinated Simultaneous Testimonies

(1) The Lord Instructs Cornelius to Send for Peter (**Acts 10:1-8**)

(a) Cornelius and the Angel

1. “There was a certain man in **Caesarea** called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, **a devout man** and one who **feared God** with all his household, who **gave alms** generously to the people, and **prayed to God** always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in **a vision** an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!” And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, **“What is it, Lord?”** So he said to him, **“Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.** Now send men to **Joppa**, and send for Simon whose surname is **Peter**. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. **He will tell you what you must do.**” And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and **a devout soldier** from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all these

things to them, he sent them to Joppa.” Acts 10:1-8
NKJV

- a) Cornelius was a Roman Centurion
 - 1) A Centurion is a Roman soldier in the Italian Regiment in charge of 100 men in a regiment of 600 men.
- b) He was a devout man who feared the God of the Jews, prayed always, and sought to live in obedience to God’s commands, along with his family.
 - 1) God Fearer: This means, although not a complete convert to Judaism, he was worshiping and obeying the one true God.
- c) An angel appears to Cornelius and as expected, it frightened him, but he knew it was from the Lord.
- d) His response is admirable: “What is it, Lord?”
- e) The angel assures him that God has heard his prayers and gives him instructions.
- f) Send men to Joppa to fetch Peter. I’ve been preparing him for this moment. He’s staying with Simon the tanner. He will know what to tell you.
- g) Cornelius immediately sends two of his servants and one of his soldiers, who serves some of his

personal needs, but more importantly one who has similar faith as his.

h) He explains their assignment and then they leave for Joppa.

(2) Peter's Controversial Vision (**Acts 10:9-16**)

(a) Peter is about to experience a complete about-face. (like Paul did in Chapter 9)—see [Instant...](#)

1. “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.” Acts 10:9-16 NKJV

- a) Remember, Peter was in Joppa to heal Tabitha and he was staying with Simon the tanner.
- b) As the delegate gets close to Joppa the next day, Peter went up to the roof to pray.
- c) He felt hungry and seemed to zone out.
- d) Then he had a vision of giant spread of wild animals, bugs, reptiles, rodents, and birds coming down from the sky on a large blanket suspended on four sides.
- e) He was instructed to get up, slaughter something and eat it—he was hungry you know!
- f) The inference here is that none of the creatures represented are fit to eat (clean, kosher) according to the Torah, so Peter vehemently rejects the invitation.
- g) In his entire life as an obedient Jew he has never eaten anything forbidden by law (unclean food that is common for pagans to consume.)
 - 1) Hint: common is also a designation that distinguishes something from being holy (set-apart).
- h) Peter then receives a clue that God is NOT talking about food here.

- 1) Hint: he is about to receive an invitation to visit a Gentile's home.
 - i) He is told that whatever God has cleansed is no longer common. (Whatever He calls holy is holy!)
 - j) Peter tends to be a bit obstinate, as you know. This exchange is repeated *three times before he gets it.
 - 1) *Three times: "Kill and eat; Not so, Lord! What God has cleansed you must not call common."
 - 2) To further understand Peter's vision, see the excerpt below extracted from [The Food Chanel Meets the History Chanel](#). Reference that teaching for a full exposé on topic.
- (3) Time Out: a word about Visions and Dreams...
- (a) Peter was well aware that God would be speaking through visions and dreams as he was the one who connected Pentecost in Acts 2 to Joel's prophecy, "*Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.*"
 1. "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, **Your young men**

shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ”

Acts 2:16-17NKJV

2. ““And it shall come to pass afterward That **I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh**; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, **Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.**” Joel 2:28

NKJV

- (b) And it became obvious to Peter that the vision God gave him with the animals on the blanket was to move him towards something that was prepared for him long ago and that it was his job to walk in it!

1. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God ***prepared beforehand** that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10 NKJV

(4) Peter is Summoned to Caesarea (**Acts 10:17-23**)

- (a) We cannot assume that this vision (out of context) is God’s way of releasing humanity from His prescribed food laws in the Torah. (Although you’d think it was, judging from 2000 years of doctrinal teachings that use Peter’s vision to release Christians to eat anything they desire.)

1. “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. **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." Then he invited them in and lodged them. **On the next day Peter went away with them,** and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him." Acts 10:17-23 NKJV

- a) Peter "*wondered within himself what this vision meant.*" He does NOT even assume that the vision is about food.
- b) At that moment, Cornelius' men arrive looking for Peter and the Holy Spirit tells Peter that three men

are there to see him and to trust them and go with them because God sent them.

- c) Peter meets them and inquires about why they've come to see him.
- d) They tell Peter that Cornelius sent them by divine instruction, *which jives with what the Spirit just told him.
 - 1) "Cornelius is a righteous God-fearing man with a good reputation and he was told by God to send for you and to invite you to his home because you have something to tell him that has been ***prepared beforehand.**"
- e) Peter invites the messengers to stay overnight and the next day they left Joppa for Caesarea.

(5) *Simultaneous Testimonies

- (a) Cornelius and Peter (are hearing from the same Spirit).
 - 1. God called Cornelius and told him to send for Peter who was in nearby Joppa. "Cornelius, Peter has something to tell you." (Acts 10:1-8)
 - 2. Meanwhile, Peter is simultaneously having his famous vision with the unclean animals on a blanket and is then summoned to Caesarea to meet with Cornelius. (Acts 10:9-23)

3. Then Peter and Cornelius share the common testimony of their visions. (Acts 10:24-33)

(b) Saul and Ananias (are hearing from the same Spirit).

1. In Acts 9, we saw that God inspired Saul and Ananias about one another simultaneously.

2. God called Saul and told him to go to Damascus where he would be told what to do. (Acts 9:1-9)

3. God called Ananias and told him that he supposed to meet with Saul—where to go, what to do, and what to tell him. (Acts 9:10-19)

(6) Peter Meets with Cornelius (**Acts 10:24-33**)

(a) They arrive in Caesarea the next day and Cornelius gathers his family and close friends to listen to Peter.

1. “And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, **Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.** But Peter lifted him up, saying, **“Stand up; I myself am also a man.”** And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, **“You know how unlawful it is** for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. **But God has**

shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore **I came without objection as soon as I was sent for.** I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?" So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. **When he comes, he will speak to you.'** So I sent to you immediately, and **you have done well to come.** Now therefore, **we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.'"**

Acts 10:24-33 NKJV

- a) When Cornelius sees Peter he bows, as if to worshiped him, and Peter quickly corrects him. Don't worship me Cornelius; Like you, I am just a man.
- b) As a large contingent of Gentiles gather, Peter makes a very telling statement. He shares this

about the current state of Judaism, one which cannot be supported by Torah.

c) Here's a paraphrase of what he said... "It's against Torah for a Jew to have a gathering with or even visit a Gentile." (This is not only untrue, it is the exact opposite of Torah. Israel was commanded to be a light to the nations!)

1) "Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be **My Servant** To raise up **the tribes of Jacob**, And **to restore the preserved ones of Israel**; I will also give You as a light to the **Gentiles**, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' "" Isaiah 49:6 NKJV

2) "**Arise, shine; For your light has come!** And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. **The Gentiles shall come to your light**, And kings to the brightness of your rising. "Lift up your eyes all around, and see: They all gather together, they come to you; Your sons shall come from afar, And your daughters shall be nursed at your

side. Then you shall see and become radiant,
And your heart shall swell with joy; **Because the
abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,
The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.**"

Isaiah 60:1-5 NKJV

- d) Peter continues... "However, the extenuating circumstance here is that God prepared me for this 'special' calling with a bizarre series of visions, and He told me that I must come here, while simultaneously He was telling Cornelius to send for me." *See Simultaneous Testimonies in #(5) above.
- e) And here is the big take away. I was wondering what the vision that I had three times meant.
 - 1) It was never about food. Food was an object lesson, serving as a metaphor for what was unclean.
 - 2) And what God was doing was breaking through my wrong mindset about Gentiles, the mindset that would have us Jews believe that *"It's against Torah for a Jew to have a gathering with or even visit a Gentile."*

- 3) That's been wrong all along and the vision was God's way of showing me that *"I should never call a man common or unclean whom God has made clean, no matter what their religious background or national heritage. That is why when your men came to get me, I came immediately without objection."*
- f) How exactly did God break Peter's old mindset?
 - 1) Three times God said, "Kill and eat"
 - 2) Three times Peter said, "Not so, Lord! What God has cleansed you must not call common."
 - 3) Peter wondered what this vision meant...
 - 4) God showed him that he should not call any man common or unclean that God called clean!
- g) "So, let's get down to business, why did you send for me?" Peter asks.
- h) Cornelius tells his testimony...
 - 1) *"Four days ago, while fasting and in prayer, an angel visited me and told me that God was listening. He told me to send for Peter in Joppa and that he was staying with Simon, a tanner."*
 - 2) *"He also told me that when Peter comes he will have something to tell me. And that was it. He*

*didn't tell me what that was, so when you ask,
'Why did you send for me?' That's all I got!"*

3) *"I followed the angel's instructions immediately,
and, Peter, it's good that you did also."*

4) *"So, we are all here waiting to hear what God
has ***prepared you beforehand** to tell us!"*

(7) Peter Preaches to the Household of Cornelius (**Acts
10:34-43**)

(a) Peter explains what he was there to say...

1. See if you can recognize the short and simple and
concise Gospel of Salvation.

a) Cornelius' heart change came first and then he was
inspired by God.

b) Peter presents the simple Gospel of Salvation. It
requires 211 words and 1 min. 8 sec. to preach!

2. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: **[BEGIN]** **"In
truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in
every nation whoever fears Him and works
righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which
God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace
through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— that word
you know, which was proclaimed throughout all
Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism**

which John preached: how **God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power**, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for **God was with Him**. And **we are witnesses** of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, **whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day**, and **showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God**, even to us who **ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead**. And **He commanded us to preach** to the people, **and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God** to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, **whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins** [END]."" Acts 10:34-43 NKJV

- a) Peter explains: what this all comes down to is that God is not prejudice.
- b) It does not matter what nation you are from, as long as you fear God, repent, and live righteously, you will find His favor.

- c) Sure, the word originally came through Israel, but that was all to lead to Y'shua, the Lord and Savior of all mankind, not just Israel.
- d) It's the message we were preaching in Jerusalem and then when we got driven out it spread throughout Judea.
- e) It began when John baptized Y'shua up in Galilee and the Holy Spirit descended on Him and He was filled with the power of God.
- f) He went around healing the sick and taking dominion over demons and we witnessed the whole thing.
- g) The religious elite had Him executed on a cross and His Father raised Him from the grave after three days and three nights.
- h) So many people saw Him after the resurrection, but He was revealed only to those God wished.
- i) We personally shared meals with Him after He rose from the grave.
- j) And He commissioned us to spread the good news of His life, death and resurrection to all people, and to be sure they understand that God gave Y'shua the authority to judge the world.

k) Here is the bottom Cornelius. When you said, “We are all here waiting to hear what God has commanded you to tell us,” this is it! **“THROUGH HIS NAME, WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL RECEIVE REMISSION OF SINS.”**

(8) The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (**Acts 10:44-48**)

(a) As Peter is explaining how God is not prejudice, the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles and they start speaking in tongues and glorifying God.

1. **“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”** Acts 10:44-48 NKJV

- a) (See the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in [Instant...](#))
(See [To Be Continued...](#) for a complete explanation on the gift of tongues.)
- b) The Jews watching are amazed that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, just as they had.
- c) Peter then sees the next logical step is to baptize these people in water in the name of Y'shua!
- d) Cornelius and his company request for Peter stay a few days before he departs.

B. God had to help radically change Peter's mindset!

(1) Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation
+ Action + Results = Testimony

(a) Peter has an engrained wrong *Mindset* believing it was against his religion to associate with Gentiles...

1. "Then he said to them, **"You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation."**" Acts 10:28a NKJV

(b) God gave Peter a *Vision* that would short circuit his current way of thinking...

1. "Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, **he fell into a trance**" ...And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat [3X]."
Acts 10:10, 13 NKJV

- (c) Peter thankfully did not persist to resist and he was willing to *Reconsider* his stance...
1. "Now while **Peter wondered** within himself what this vision which he had seen meant..." Acts 10:17a NKJV
- (d) God softened Peter's sclerotic beliefs; this allowed him to receive a fresh *Revelation* on which he took action...
1. "**But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came** without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?" Acts 10:28b-29 NKJV
- (e) Peter responded to the fresh revelation by taking specific *Actions* in obedience to God...
1. "And **He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify** that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, **through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.**" Acts 10:42-43 NKJV
- (f) The *Result* of Peter's transformed thinking, and the action he took because of it, changed the course of history...

1. **“While Peter was still speaking** these words, **the Holy Spirit fell** upon all those who heard the word.” Acts 10:44 NKJV
- (g) Peter shares his *Testimony* and it helps change the wrong mindsets of others, and so on, and so on...
1. **“And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!””** Acts 11:2-3 NKJV
 2. **“If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”** When they heard these things they became silent; and **they glorified God**, saying, **“Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”**” Acts 11:17-18 NKJV
 3. Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony
- (2) Taking thoughts captive and renewing the mind! This is what Peter needed in response to his vision.
- (a) Take every engrained thought captive that is at odds with God’s way of thinking and realign it with God’s heart on the matter. That is how you become qualified to be His agent.

1. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that **exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,** and **being ready to punish** all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” II Corinthians 10:4-6 NKJV
- (b) You are no longer permitted to feed your erroneous religious beliefs that make you appear more like a part of the sinful world than a child of God. Transformation begins in the mind and your job is to examine your mind day-by-day and moment-by-moment and to bring your thoughts into alignment with God’s perfect will!
 1. “And **do not be conformed to this world,** but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind,** that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and **perfect will of God.**” Romans 12:2 NKJV
- (c) How can you take every thought captive and renew your mind? Pray, Study, Praise!
 1. PRAY! “**Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.**” Psalms 51:10 NKJV

2. **STUDY!** “**Teach me Your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart,** so that I may honor you.” Psalms 86:11 NLT
3. **PRAISE!** “**With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give glory** to your name forever,”
Psalms 86:12 NLT
 - a) *Pray* for God to cleanse your heart and renew your spirit daily!
 - b) *Study* His word and ask God to teach His ways so you can live in truth!
 - c) *Praise* God and glorify Him with your entire being!

C. Revisionist History (Let’s review Peter’s vision and see what it means when you take every thought captive and transform your mind!)

- (1) The following is an excerpt of commentary on the subject from: [The Food Chanel Meets the History Chanel](#). Most of the scripture themselves have been removed and remain as references only. Follow the link for the full study.
- (2) Christmas Ham and Easter Bunnies (*Notice that what you’ve been taught about the following scriptures is often the exact opposite of what they mean.*)
 - (a) Don’t you find it interesting that not only do Christians routinely violate God’s food laws, but they attach their

habitual disobedience to the man-made holidays that they disobediently substitute for Yahweh's Feasts, also in violation of God's laws? (The Hare and Swine are unclean to you! Leviticus 11:4-7)

(3) Peter's Vision (It's not about the food! Acts 10:1-48)

(a) Peter has a vision in which three times God tells him to kill and eat unclean animals. All three times he says no. He refuses to eat foods in violation of God commandments. God then tells him, *"What I have cleansed you must not call common."* Christians worldwide, and across time have interpreted this as a release to eat anything they wish. If we read the narrative in its entirety we will see otherwise!

(b) Was Yahweh now calling formally unclean foods clean? Has He changed His Word that endures forever? Of course not. The vision is not about food; He is referring to Gentiles. The entire narrative (read Acts 10:1-48) was to inform Peter that he was to go to the pagans and preach, starting in the house of Cornelius. It was not about changing food laws; the vision was a metaphor!

(c) And as we see in Acts 15:6-11, Peter even gives his testimony and how God supernaturally revealed to him **(prepared beforehand!)** that he was to go fulfill what

the Scriptures already prophesied, that the Jewish Messiah was also for the Gentiles. Nowhere in his testimony does he suddenly reveal that God has released His people to eat unclean foods! The vision was a metaphor!

(4) What about Paul? (I Timothy 4:1-4)

(a) Paul's Admonition: Was Paul preaching that food laws had changed? Was Paul saying it is a doctrine of demons to still restrict foods according to the laws of clean and unclean in Leviticus 11?

1. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in **latter times** some will depart from the faith, **giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons**, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and **commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth**. For ***every creature of God is good**, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;" I Timothy 4:1-4 NKJV

a) KEY REVELATION: "foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

- b) Had Yahweh ever created unclean things as foods to be received with thanksgiving. Of course not!
- c) *Every creature of God created for food is good.
ALL FOODS ARE PURE OR THEY WOULD NOT BE CALLED FOODS!
- d) Paul is obviously referring to some other doctrine, some other restriction imposed by man.
- e) How could Paul ever refer to the Laws in Leviticus, which he strictly adhered to, as “doctrines of demons”? He would not and did not!
- f) The answer is clear; the doctrine of demons is any doctrine that espouses that you cannot participate in foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
- g) When you know the “truth” you will not be fooled by deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.
- h) How disturbing is it to consider that most of Christianity falls on the side of being deceived on this topic?
- i) And consider how what is historically taught on this topic is the EXACT OPPOSITE of the truth.

- j) Final note: lies about marriage are also mentioned here. The same deceiving spirits that have twisted the truth about food have also lied about the sanctity of marriage. Does this sound familiar? Just turn on the NEWS!
- k) Ask yourself, as a follower of Christ: "How could have I been deceived by such a spirit?" It's time to WAKE UP!

(5) Jesus Clarifies....

- (a) It does not matter what a man puts in his mouth as far as food is concerned?
 1. "When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: **There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.** If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" Mark 7:14-16 NKJV
- a) What you are taught: It does not matter what a man eats. It will not defile him.
- b) On the surface, that is a true statement. A bad food choice, or an unclean food choice does not defile a man.

- c) But does that truth then negate that you are still commanded to eat no unclean food?
- d) Also, is this teaching about food at all? The answer to both is NO, as you will realize when you keep His words in context.
- e) [Mark 7:1-13] Context! *“Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”* Y’shua cuts right to the heart of the matter. There is no law in Torah that commands a hand washing before eating bread. It is a doctrine and commandment of men. Calling someone defiled because they don’t adhere to some manmade tradition is hypocrisy. Moreover, you can see that there is no context about clean or unclean food, just some guilt trip laid on Y’shua’s disciples for not keeping to tradition. These accusers are such hypocrites that their religious adherence to their own laws makes God’s real law of no effect.
- f) [Mark 7:17-23] Y’shua goes on to explain that nothing can defile a man from the outside; it is the evil in his heart that then comes out of him that defiles him. And, don’t get hooked on the phrase

in verse 19, *“thus purifying all foods,”* as this seems to be an added phrase not found in the older manuscripts, and of course is completely out of context. Just as with Peter’s vision, this is not about food at all, but about man’s refusal to make God’s laws a priority over their own belief-system. Back in Acts 10, as you’ve learned, Peter had no interest in preaching Messiah to the Gentiles and God had to correct him on that wrong *“man-made doctrine.”*

(6) Understanding Paul in Romans 14!

- (a) [Romans 14:1-4] There is likely no greater example of an area of scripture interpreted to mean the EXACT OPPOSITE of Paul’s intention than Romans 14. This is the standard takeaway: *“Those who think they should adhere to Old Testament Food laws are weak in the faith.”* This is what he is actually saying: *“Those who don’t know the Old Testament Food laws and how they apply to them are weak in the faith.”*
- (b) [Romans 14:5-9] Whatever you do, give thanks to the Lord.
- (c) [Romans 14:10-13] Whatever you decide, don’t judge your brother for his level of knowledge and

understanding. In the end, everyone must give an account of himself to God.

(7) The True Apologetic of Romans 14!

- (a) Throughout Christendom it is classically taught that what Paul is saying in Romans 14 is that those who are still under the delusion that they must adhere to dietary laws of the Old Testament are those who are “weak in the faith!”
- (b) The key to understanding Paul’s context here is the phrase “*eat only vegetables.*” There was never such a restriction in the Torah to do so, but rather Paul is telling those who are mature in the faith (those who know exactly what the Scriptures say about foods they are permitted to eat—see Leviticus 11 and 20, those who can distinguish clean from unclean) to bear with those who have no clue, in other words, those who are weak in the faith.
- (c) In their presence (the weak), if necessary, choose only vegetables along with them. You see, those who choose only vegetables do so because they CANNOT DISTINGUISH clean from unclean meats.
- (d) This way they do not have guilty feelings that they might have eaten meats that are forbidden.

- (e) Do not exercise your liberty to eat clean meats in front of them, as to not cause them to stumble. And the reverse is true as well. Those who don't know, (the weak in the faith), should not judge those who do know.
- (8) The Holy Spirit's Confirmation that Food Laws (kosher) still applies today!
 - (a) Let's set the stage... Galatians 2:1-21
 1. Fourteen years after his Road to Damascus encounter, Paul goes to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus.
 2. He went by revelation to share what had been happening among the Gentiles, but also to meet privately with church leaders.
 3. Titus who was Greek was not compelled to be circumcised. False brethren were claiming you must be circumcised to be saved. And Titus' testimony was a statement to the contrary. Of course, Paul is not against circumcision, but against any doctrine that adds to the cross of Christ alone for redemption.
 4. Paul was not seeking approval from leaders in Jerusalem; he was confident that he was called to bring the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter ultimately was called to the circumcised. (Of course

Peter was first knocked into reality by his calling to go to the uncircumcised, as we have learned.)

5. James, Cephas (Peter), and John gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, affirming their ministry as being inspired by God.
 6. Paul explains that he had to straighten out Peter's doctrine and hypocrisy in Antioch because he was eating with the Gentiles until other Jews were around, then he withdrew and separated himself.
 7. Note: you will see shortly in Acts 15 that Peter testifies to having received correction!
- (b) See Acts 14:21-28: Paul goes to Antioch and stays a while before heading off to Jerusalem as we see in Galatians 2.
- (c) [Acts 15:1-5] This is what is happening for the context of Acts 15. Men with bad doctrine are adding something to the "cross alone" doctrine of redemption. They are preaching you have to be circumcised and keep all the law to get saved! This is what the argument is against. It is not an argument against circumcision and the law; but against them being a REQUIREMENT to be born-again. Paul comes to challenge this bad

doctrine and set the record straight. He shares his mission testimonies and gets down to business.

- (d) [Acts 15:6-11] Peter had obviously received his correction as he is the first to stand up and claim that the Gentiles came to the faith by grace as we all do! The law did not get the Jew saved and will not get the Gentile saved.
- (e) [Acts 15:12-18] Paul and Barnabas finish their testimonies and then James takes over the meeting, acknowledges Peter's contribution and affirms that God always had a plan for the Gentiles.
- (f) [Acts 15:19-21] The Ruling: Then James makes a ruling about the corrected way the law applies to new converts to the faith. There are three categories of laws Gentiles are to add to the practice of their faith. They are not singular laws, but categories, and the details will get filled for them like they do for everyone, by going to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Categories: (1) Idolatry (2) Sexual Sin (3) Kosher Food (No Blood). I would make special note that the early church was clear that "no blood" meant that "Kosher" laws remained in tact for God's people!

- (g) [Acts 15:22-31] The Official Letter: The ruling pleases all the leaders and of course the Gentiles are thrilled. They should not be troubled from anyone who adds anything to faith alone to be saved (like circumcision and the law). That point of view is officially rejected and the letter is delivered to Antioch.

BREAKING THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT

2. A Change in Direction

A. The Testimony

- (1) Peter defends his actions! (**Acts 11:1-18**)

- (a) The religious spirit is not limited to the Jews who don't believe. Even believers are unhappy that Peter went to the Gentiles.

1. "Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that **the Gentiles had also received the word of God**. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, **those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"** But **Peter explained it to them** in order from the beginning, saying: "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven

by four corners; and it came to me. When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. **At that very moment**, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these **six brethren accompanied me**, and we entered the man's house. And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, **who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.**' And as I began to speak, **the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord**, how He said, '**John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with**

the Holy Spirit.' If therefore **God gave them the same gift as He gave us** when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, **who was I that I could withstand God?"** When they heard these things **they became silent; and they glorified God,** saying, "Then **God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."**" Acts 11:1-18 NKJV

- a) Remember, Peter left Jerusalem in Acts 8:14-25 to see what Philip was doing in Samaria (Samaritans were not considered Gentiles) and he brought an encounter of the Holy Spirit to all those who had just been born again. That is when Simon the sorcerer had offered to pay for the power of the Holy Spirit and he was strongly rebuked by Peter.
- b) In Acts 9:32-35, Peter moved on from Samaria to Lydda, a city eleven miles southeast of Joppa, where he healed Aeneas.
- c) And then in Acts 9:36:43 he went to Joppa (Peter in Joppa Part I) and raised Dorcas (Tabitha) from the dead. He was having a miraculous trip, but it was about to get even more exciting than raising the dead.

- d) It was in Acts 10 in Joppa that Peter had the vision and then in Caesarea he had his encounter with Cornelius, which changed his mindset about the Gentiles. It proved to him that Y'shua, the Messiah of Israel, was for all nations.
- e) Now he is back in Jerusalem and news that Peter had preached the word of God to the Gentiles had reached Jerusalem before his return.
- f) Yes, even in the Church, all of whom are Jews (those of the circumcision) up to that moment, the religious spirit is alive and well.
- g) The Jewish believers are not happy Peter fellowshiped with, let alone brought Christ to, the Gentiles, but Peter explains...
 - 1) The church is harassing the church: *"You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"*
- h) He recounts for them his step-by-step testimony:

Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony

 - 1) I had a vision three times in Joppa, and it meant, *"What God has cleansed you must not call common."*

- 2) The vision was not about the animals on the sheets, but about the Gentiles to whom I was called to preach.
- 3) My very own interpretation of the visions was specific: “...*God has shown me that I should **not call any man** common or unclean.*” Acts 10:28
 - i) Then Peter tells them about the testimony of Cornelius, which happened simultaneously in Caesarea, and how it influenced his decision to go and changed his mindset about Gentiles, and what happened to the Gentiles because of it.
 - 1) He sent servants to me because an angel told him that I had a message for him. They arrived immediately after my blanket vision; it was all in perfect alignment as only God can do.
 - 2) You see, I wouldn't have gone to a house full of Gentiles (even one like Cornelius' which was filled with people wanting to worship our God—those who were God-fearers), unless I already had the supernatural revelation, “...*that I should **not call any man** common or unclean, that what God has cleansed I must not call common!*”

- 3) And let's be honest; where did we even come up with the religious mindset that what we have is not for the Gentiles—it's all throughout the Torah and the Prophets. We were meant to evangelize the nations, be a light unto the Gentiles. It's just a religious spirit that's been holding us back.
- 4) So, the visions made it clear to me that I was to go with them to see Cornelius, and I did so with six witnesses.
- 5) When I brought them the message of Y'shua, all of Cornelius' family and friends received Christ and the Holy Spirit fell upon them (as it did us at Pentecost).
- j) The whole thing reminded Peter of what Y'shua said about John. 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
- 1) Here's the bottom line; if God intends to give the same gift to Gentiles, who was I to stand in the way.
- k) Peter testified to all those in Jerusalem, "*Who was I that I could withstand God?*" This is the same stance he took when he was TOLD NOT to preach

in the Name of Y'shua when he stood at trial before Jewish unbelievers. And it was the same stance Gamaliel took when he advised those same Jewish unbelievers.

- 1) “But **Peter and John** answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. **For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.**”” Acts 4:19-20 NKJV
- 2) “But **Peter** and the other apostles answered and said: “**We ought to obey God rather than men.**” Acts 5:29 NKJV
- 3) [Gamaliel speaking] “but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—**lest you even be found to fight against God.**”” Acts 5:39 NKJV
- l) Thankfully, Peter broke through his religious spirit and so do the believers in Jerusalem after they heard his testimony. They ALL glorified God for what He was doing!
 - 1) The Jewish believers became silent and could do nothing but come into agreement with Peter.
 - 2) Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony

B. Barnabas: the EXCELLENT role model

(1) Barnabas and Saul Unite in Ministry (**Acts 11:19-26**)

(a) Barnabas takes another chance on Saul

1. “Now **those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled** as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, **preaching the word to no one but the Jews only**. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, **spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus**. And **the hand of the Lord was with them**, and a **great number believed** and turned to the Lord. Then **news** of these things **came to** the ears of the church in **Jerusalem**, and they sent out **Barnabas** to go as far as **Antioch**. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and **encouraged them all** that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For **he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith**. And a great **many** people were **added** to the Lord. **Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul**. And when he had found him, **he brought him to Antioch**. So it was that for **a whole year they assembled with the church** and taught a great many people. **And the disciples were**

first called Christians in Antioch.” Acts 11:19-26

NKJV

- a) Those who were scattered in the persecution in Jerusalem, especially after Stephen’s execution, passed through Phoenicia and went as far north as Antioch, and even over to the Island of Cyprus.
- b) They focussed on preaching to only the Jews.
- c) In Antioch there were men who came from Cyprus, which is approximately 255 miles (400km) off the coast of Antioch, and from Cyrene in Libya, North Africa which was approximately 1500 miles (2400km) from Antioch.
- d) They spoke to the Hellenists (believing Hellenists) in Antioch about Y’shua, and God used the Hellenists to bring many of those visitors to faith in Christ.
 - 1) This is in contrast to the unbelieving Hellenists who wanted to kill Saul in Jerusalem.
 - 2) “And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and **disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.**” Acts 9:29 NKJV

- 3) Remember: Hellenist were full on Jews who also maintained the Greek language and social culture.
- e) News of these conversions reached Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to Antioch.
- f) Barnabas was “the son of encouragement,” a faithful man full of the Holy Spirit.
- g) He finds God’s grace in full swing and he encourages them to purposely continue to seek God wholeheartedly.
- h) More and more converts came to faith and then Barnabas sets out for Tarsus to seek Saul.
- i) Remember, Barnabas was the one who took a chance on Saul when Saul showed up in Jerusalem in Acts 9, after he was chased from Damascus shortly after his conversion. Everyone was apprehensive of Saul (except Barnabas), thinking his testimony might just be a trick.
- j) Saul was also chased from Jerusalem and headed home to Tarsus.
- k) Tarsus is in Turkey, further north (and then west) of Antioch.

- l) Barnabas seeks Saul in Tarsus and brings him to Antioch where they ministered for an entire year.
- m) It was at that time in Antioch that followers of Y'shua were first labeled Christians.
 - 1) In order to understand the timing of Paul's journeys to Jerusalem, it is necessary to integrate and coordinate Paul's testimony and call to ministry in Acts 9-12 with his visits to Jerusalem in Acts 15 and 21. To do so, you must lay in the timeline by using Galatians 1 and 2.
 - 2) I've chosen to include a link to [A Chronological Study of Paul's Ministry](#) instead of writing one at this time. There are many good resources and I've found this one to be quite helpful.
 - 3) The key takeaway here is that what might appear to be just days or weeks is actually many years!

(2) Financial Relief Sent to Judea (**Acts 11:27-30**)

- (a) A prophet from Jerusalem came to Antioch and predicted that a famine was coming.
 - 1. "And in these days **prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch**. Then one of them, named **Agabus**, stood up and **showed** by the Spirit that there was going to be a

great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. **Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.** This they also did, and **sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.**” Acts 11:27-30 NKJV

- a) The disciples in Antioch sent resources down to Judea (and Jerusalem) with Barnabas and Saul as preparation.
 - 1) Remember they were using resources in Jerusalem up to that moment
 - 2) ...sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (*This will be referred to later in Paul's testimony.*)

A NEW ERA OF PERSECUTION

3. The Persecution is Spreading

A. Rome is Now Harassing the Church

(1) Herod's Violence against the Church (**Acts 12:1-4**)

(a) Herod (Agrippa I) gets in on the action.

1. “Now about **that time Herod** the king stretched out his hand to **harass some from the church.** Then **he killed James the brother of John with the sword.** And

because **he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.** Now it was during **the Days of Unleavened Bread.** So when he had **arrested him,** he **put him in prison,** and delivered him to **four squads of soldiers to keep him,** **intending to bring him before the people after Passover."** Acts 12:1-4 NKJV

- a) Herod (Agrippa I) is the grandson of Herod the Great (the one responsible for the massacre of the innocents at the time of Y'shua's birth).
- b) We've gone from the Jews harassing the Church, to the Church harassing the Church, and now Rome is harassing the Church.
- c) Herod Agrippa is responsible for killing James the brother of John. James becomes the second martyr and the first of the original twelve to be killed for his faith.
- d) Herod sees that his actions please the Jews (those who did not believe Y'shua was the Messiah). He is following in the footsteps of Herod Antipas (his uncle, the son of Herod the Great) who was ruling at the time of Y'shua's crucifixion.

- e) Roman leaders often wished to please the Jews in some way—to keep them from rebelling.
- f) In as much as the killing of James pleased the non-believing Jews, Herod Agrippa arrests Peter during the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- g) He places Peter in prison (his 3rd time in prison).
- h) He is heavily guarded by four squads of soldiers.
- i) Herod's intent is to keep him in prison until the Feast is done and then bring him to trial after the Passover.

(2) Peter Freed from Prison (**Acts 12:5-19**)

- (a) Peter has been incarcerated before, but this is his first time as a prisoner of Rome.

1. “Peter was therefore **kept in prison**, but **constant prayer** was offered to God for him by the church. And **when Herod was about to bring him out**, that night Peter was **sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers**; and **the guards before the door were keeping the prison**. Now behold, **an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison**; and he struck Peter on the side and **raised him up**, saying, “Arise quickly!” And **his chains fell off his hands**. Then the angel said to him, “**Gird yourself and**

tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, **"Put on your garment and follow me."** So he went out and followed him, and **did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.** When they were **past the first and the second guard posts,** they came to the **iron gate** that leads to the city, which **opened to them of its own accord;** and they went out and went down one street, and **immediately the angel departed** from him. And when Peter **had come to himself,** he said, **"Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."** So, when he had considered this, **he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John** whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And as **Peter knocked** at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. But they said to her, **"You are beside yourself!"** Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel." Now Peter

continued knocking; and **when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.** But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, **he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.** And he said, **“Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.”** And he departed and went to another place. Then, as soon as it was day, **there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.** But when **Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death.** And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.” Acts 12:5-19 NKJV

- a) Other believers are in ongoing prayer for him as the situation is dire, considering what just happened to James.
- b) But, the night before Herod is to bring him out of prison to stand trial, while he’s asleep in chains between two guards, an angel appears to Peter as a bright light.
- c) The angel wakes him by striking his side, as the chains fall from his wrists, and tells him to get up and prepare himself to run out of there quickly.

- d) Peter was not even sure if it was real or if he was dreaming.
- e) Nevertheless, he is led past two guard posts and through an iron gate that opened on its own.
- f) He finds himself in the city and then the angel disappears.
- g) At that point he realizes that it is real and that he has just been freed from what Herod was about to do to to him, in an effort to please the Jews (likely he would have gone the way of James whom Herod recently executed).
- h) Peter finds his way to where the believers are gathered praying and when he knocks, the girl who answered is so shocked that she runs back inside to inform the others, before she even opens the door for Peter.
- i) They don't believe her anyway; they think she's losing it!
- j) She insists and they relent, believing she is likely seeing an angel.
- k) But they investigate to find it is Peter and they are stunned.

- l) He tells them how it all happened and asks they go inform James and the other apostles.
 - 1) This is the other James (as James the brother of John is now dead).
 - 2) He is the leader of the Church in Jerusalem, Jesus' next younger brother and the author of James. He is known as Apostle James the Less.
 - 3) His predominant place of residence is in Jerusalem, as implied in Galatians 1:18-19...
*“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except **James, the Lord’s brother.**” Galatians 1:18-19*
- m) Peter leaves and heads out. Meanwhile, the next morning there is chaos back with the soldiers, as they have no idea what happened to Peter when Herod asked for him to be brought.
- n) Herod has them executed for insubordination.
- o) Peter left Judea for Caesarea, where is stayed for a while.
- p) This is the last we see of Peter in Acts, other than his appearance in Acts 15 for the Jerusalem Council .

(3) Herod's Violent Death (Acts 12:20-24)

(a) Herod Agrippa was not happy.

1. "Now **Herod had been very angry with the people** of Tyre and Sidon; but **they came to him with one accord**, and having made Blastus **the king's personal aide their friend**, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country. **So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel**, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "**The voice of a god and not of a man!**" Then **immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God**. And **he was eaten by worms and died**. But the word of God grew and multiplied." Acts 12:20-24 NKJV

a) Herod Agrippa was not happy, but the people of Tyre and Sidon made friends with Blastus, the king's personal aid and friend.

b) They just wanted to live in peace as they were dependent on the Herods food supply.

c) Herod shows up in he royal garments and gives a speech. And the people pander to him... "*The voice of a god and not of a man!*"

- d) This ends very badly, as instantly he is stuck down, eaten by worms and dies. (Notice that he is eaten alive; that is what kills him. As opposed to dying and then being consumed by worms.)
- e) Why? He insisted on glorifying himself and not Yahweh.

(4) Compare Herod's response to Simon the sorcerer's...

(a) Simon was treading on thin ice... "...**claiming that he was someone great**, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "**This man is the great power of God.**" (Acts 8:9-10)

1. But, Simon shifted and obviously moved away from believing in his own greatness and acknowledged Christ! "*Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized ...*" (Acts 8:13)
2. Herod made no such concession and Yahweh took him out!

(b) Related topics:

1. See: [Fire, Worms & Warring Angels](#) to explore some of the ways God institutes punishment against those who demonstrate that they will NEVER repent!
2. See also: [Disruptive Technology](#) to study the consequences of the unpardonable sin!

(5) First Mission Complete (**Acts 12:25**)

(a) Barnabas and Saul are about to become official...

1. "And **Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem** when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also **took with them John whose surname was Mark.**"

Acts 12:25 NKJV

- a) Meanwhile, Barnabas and Saul (and John Mark) had been sent on a mission from Jerusalem to feed people in need (Acts 11:27-30).
- b) Now they are back in Antioch from Jerusalem having fulfilled their assignment.

B. Prepared Beforehand

(1) For what?

(a) Peter was created for a purpose and he was going to suffer to bring glory to God...

1. "This He spoke, **signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God.** And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me.'" John 21:19 NKJV

(b) Paul was created for a purpose and he was going to suffer to bring glory to God...

1. "For I will show him [Paul] how many things **he must suffer for My name's sake.**" Acts 9:16 NKJV

- (c) Yahweh chose to use Peter to first bring the Gospel to the Gentiles...
1. “And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago **God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.**” Acts 15:7 NKJV
- (d) Yahweh chose to use Paul to expand the Gospel to the Gentiles...
1. “When he had greeted them, he [Paul] told in detail those things **which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.**” Acts 21:19 NKJV
- (e) Sidebar: Yahweh chose a very different fate for Herod...
1. “Then immediately **an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.**” Acts 12:23 NKJV
- (f) Your turn: Bring Glory to God or Worm Food?
1. “For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works,** which God **prepared beforehand** that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10 NKJV

Summary: ORCHESTRATED TO PERFECTION

1. Peter in Joppa (Part II) see [Instant...](#) for Part I

A. Perfectly Coordinated Simultaneous Testimonies

(1) The Lord Instructs Cornelius to Send for Peter (**Acts 10:1-8**)

(a) Cornelius and the Angel

1. Cornelius was a Roman Centurion
2. A Centurion is a Roman soldier in the Italian Regiment in charge of 100 men in a regiment of 600 men.
3. He was a devout man who feared the God of the Jews, prayed always, and sought to live in obedience to God's commands, along with his family.
4. God Fearer: This means, although not a complete convert to Judaism, he was worshiping and obeying the one true God.
5. An angel appears to Cornelius and as expected, it frightened him, but he knew it was from the Lord.
6. His response is admirable: "What is it, Lord?"
7. The angel assures him that God has heard his prayers and gives him instructions.
8. Send men to Joppa to fetch Peter. I've been preparing him for this moment. He's staying with Simon the tanner. He will know what to tell you.

9. Cornelius immediately sends two of his servants and one of his soldiers, who serves some of his personal needs, but more importantly one who has similar faith as his.
10. He explains their assignment and then they leave for Joppa.

(2) Peter's Controversial Vision (**Acts 10:9-16**)

- (a) Peter is about to experience a complete about-face. (like Paul did in Chapter 9)—see [Instant...](#)
 1. Remember, Peter was in Joppa to heal Tabitha and he was staying with Simon the tanner.
 2. As the delegate gets close to Joppa the next day, Peter went up to the roof to pray.
 3. He felt hungry and seemed to zone out.
 4. Then he had a vision of giant spread of wild animals, bugs, reptiles, rodents, and birds coming down from the sky on a large blanket suspended on four sides.
 5. He was instructed to get up, slaughter something and eat it—he was hungry you know!
 6. The inference here is that none of the creatures represented are fit to eat (clean, kosher) according to the Torah, so Peter vehemently rejects the invitation.

7. In his entire life as an obedient Jew he has never eaten anything forbidden by law (unclean food that is common for pagans to consume.)
8. Hint: common is also a designation that distinguishes something from being holy (set-apart).
9. Peter then receives a clue that God is NOT talking about food here.
10. Hint: he is about to receive an invitation to visit a Gentile's home.
11. He is told that whatever God has cleansed is no longer common. (Whatever He calls holy is holy!)
12. Peter tends to be a bit obstinate, as you know. This exchange is repeated *three times before he gets it.
13. *Three times: "Kill and eat; Not so, Lord! What God has cleansed you must not call common."
14. To further understand Peter's vision, see the excerpt below extracted from [The Food Chanel Meets the History Chanel](#). Reference that teaching for a full exposé on topic.

(3) Time Out: a word about Visions and Dreams...

- (a) Peter was well aware that God would be speaking through visions and dreams as he was the one who connected Pentecost in Acts 2 to Joel's prophecy, "Your

young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.”

- (b) And it became obvious to Peter that the vision God gave him with the animals on the blanket was to move him towards something that was ***prepared beforehand** for him long ago and that it was his job to walk in it!
- (4) Peter is Summoned to Caesarea (**Acts 10:17-23**)
- (a) We cannot assume that this vision (out of context) is God’s way of releasing humanity from His prescribed food laws in the Torah. (Although you’d think it was, judging from 2000 years of doctrinal teachings that use Peter’s vision to release Christians to eat anything they desire.)
 1. Peter *“wondered within himself what this vision meant.”* He does NOT even assume that the vision is about food.
 2. At that moment, Cornelius’ men arrive looking for Peter and the Holy Spirit tells Peter that three men are there to see him and to trust them and go with them because God sent them.
 3. Peter meets them and inquires about why they’ve come to see him.

4. They tell Peter that Cornelius sent them by divine instruction, *which jives with what the Spirit just told him.
5. “Cornelius is a righteous God-fearing man with a good reputation and he was told by God to send for you and to invite you to his home because you have something to tell him.” ***prepared beforehand!**
6. Peter invites the messengers to stay overnight and the next day they left Joppa for Caesarea.

(5) *Simultaneous Testimonies

(a) Cornelius and Peter (are hearing from the same Spirit).

1. God called Cornelius and told him to send for Peter who was in nearby Joppa. “Cornelius, Peter has something to tell you.” (Acts 10:1-8)
2. Meanwhile, Peter is simultaneously having his famous vision with the unclean animals on a blanket and is then summoned to Caesarea to meet with Cornelius. (Acts 10:9-23)
3. Then Peter and Cornelius share the common testimony of their visions. (Acts 10:24-33)

(b) Saul and Ananias (are hearing from the same Spirit).

1. In Acts 9, we saw that God inspired Saul and Ananias about one another simultaneously.

2. God called Saul and told him to go to Damascus where he would be told what to do. (Acts 9:1-9)
3. God called Ananias and told him that he supposed to meet with Saul—where to go, what to do, and what to tell him. (Acts 9:10-19)

(6) Peter Meets with Cornelius (**Acts 10:24-33**)

- (a) They arrive in Caesarea the next day and Cornelius gathers his family and close friends to listen to Peter.
 1. When Cornelius sees Peter he bows, as if to worshiped him, and Peter quickly corrects him. Don't worship me Cornelius; Like you, I am just a man.
 2. As a large contingent of Gentiles gather, Peter makes a very telling statement. He shares this about the current state of Judaism, one which cannot be supported by Torah.
 3. Here's a paraphrase of what he said... "It's against Torah for a Jew to have a gathering with or even visit a Gentile." (This is not only untrue, it is the exact opposite of Torah. Israel was commanded to be a light to the nations!)
 4. Peter continues... "However, the extenuating circumstance here is that God prepared me for this 'special' calling with a bizarre series of visions, and

He told me that I must come here, while simultaneously He was telling Cornelius to send for me." *See Simultaneous Testimonies in #(5) above.

5. And here is the big take away. I was wondering what the vision that I had three times meant.

- a) It was never about food. Food was an object lesson, serving as a metaphor for what was unclean.
- b) And what God was doing was breaking through my wrong mindset about Gentiles, the mindset that would have us Jews believe that *"It's against Torah for a Jew to have a gathering with or even visit a Gentile."*
- c) That's been wrong all along and the vision was God's way of showing me that *"I should never call a man common or unclean whom God has made clean, no matter what their religious background or national heritage. That is why when your men came to get me, I came immediately without objection."*

6. How exactly did God break Peter's old mindset?

- a) Three times God said, "Kill and eat"

- b) Three times Peter said, “Not so, Lord! What God has cleansed you must not call common.”
- c) Peter wondered what this vision meant...
- d) God showed him that he should not call any man common or unclean that God called clean!
- e) “So, let’s get down to business, why did you send for me?” Peter asks.

7. Cornelius tells his testimony...

- a) *“Four days ago, while fasting and in prayer, an angel visited me and told me that God was listening. He told me to send for Peter in Joppa and that he was staying with Simon, a tanner.”*
- b) *“He also told me that when Peter comes he will have something to tell me. And that was it. He didn’t tell me what that was, so when you ask, ‘Why did you send for me?’ That’s all I got!”*
- c) *“I followed the angel’s instructions immediately, and, Peter, it’s good that you did also.”*
- d) *“So, we are all here waiting to hear what God has ***prepared you beforehand** to tell us!”*

(7) Peter Preaches to the Household of Cornelius (**Acts 10:34-43**)

- (a) Peter explains what he was there to say...

1. See if you can recognize the short and simple and concise Gospel of Salvation.
 - a) Cornelius' heart change came first and then he was inspired by God.
 - b) Peter presents the simple Gospel of Salvation. It requires 211 words and 1 min. 8 sec. to preach!
2. Peter explains: what this all comes down to is that God is not prejudice.
3. It does not matter what nation you are from, as long as you fear God, repent, and live righteously, you will find His favor.
4. Sure, the word originally came through Israel, but that was all to lead to Y'shua, the Lord and Savior of all mankind, not just Israel.
5. It's the message we were preaching in Jerusalem and then when we got driven out it spread throughout Judea.
6. It began when John baptized Y'shua up in Galilee and the Holy Spirit descended on Him and He was filled with the power of God.
7. He went around healing the sick and taking dominion over demons and we witnessed the whole thing.

8. The religious elite had Him executed on a cross and His Father raised Him from the grave after three days and three nights.
9. So many people saw Him after the resurrection, but He was revealed only to those God wished.
10. We personally shared meals with Him after He rose from the grave.
11. And He commissioned us to spread the good news of His life, death and resurrection to all people, and to be sure they understand that God gave Y'shua the authority to judge the world.
12. Here is the bottom Cornelius. When you said, "We are all here waiting to hear what God has commanded you to tell us," this is it! "THROUGH HIS NAME, WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL RECEIVE REMISSION OF SINS."

(8) The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (**Acts 10:44-48**)

- (a) As Peter is explaining how God is not prejudice, the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles and they start speaking in tongues and glorifying God.
 1. (See the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in [Instant...](#))(See [To Be Continued...](#) for a complete explanation on the gift of tongues.)

- a) The Jews watching are amazed that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, just as they had.
- b) Peter then sees the next logical step is to baptize these people in water in the name of Y'shua!
- c) Cornelius and his company request for Peter stay a few days before he departs.

B. God had to help radically change Peter's mindset!

- (1) Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony
 - (a) Peter has an engrained wrong *Mindset* believing it was against his religion to associate with Gentiles...
 - (b) God gave Peter a *Vision* that would short circuit his current way of thinking...
 - (c) Peter thankfully did not persist to resist and he was willing to *Reconsider* his stance...
 - (d) God softened Peter's sclerotic beliefs; this allowed him to receive a fresh *Revelation* on which he took action...
 - (e) Peter responded to the fresh revelation by taking specific *Actions* in obedience to God...
 - (f) The *Result* of Peter's transformed thinking, and the action he took because of it, changed the course of history...

- (g) Peter shares his *Testimony* and it helps change the wrong mindsets of others, and so on, and so on...
 - (h) Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony
- (2) Taking thoughts captive and renewing the mind! This is what Peter needed in response to his vision.
- (a) Take every engrained thought captive that is at odds with God's way of thinking and realign it with God's heart on the matter. That is how you become qualified to be His agent.
 - (b) You are no longer permitted to feed your erroneous religious beliefs that make you appear more like a part of the sinful world than a child of God. Transformation begins in the mind and your job is to examine your mind day-by-day and moment-by-moment and to bring your thoughts into alignment with God's perfect will!
 - (c) How can you take every thought captive and renew your mind? Pray, Study, Praise!
 1. *Pray* for God to cleanse your heart and renew your spirit daily!
 2. *Study* His word and ask God to teach His ways so you can live in truth!
 3. *Praise* God and glorify Him with your entire being!

C. Revisionist History (Let's review Peter's vision and see what it means when you take every thought captive and transform your mind!)

(1) The following is an excerpt of commentary on the subject from: [The Food Chanel Meets the History Chanel](#). Most of the scripture themselves have been removed and remain as references only. Follow the link for the full study.

(2) Christmas Ham and Easter Bunnies (*Notice that what you've been taught about the following scriptures is often the exact opposite of what they mean.*)

(a) Don't you find it interesting that not only do Christians routinely violate God's food laws, but they attach their habitual disobedience to the man-made holidays that they disobediently substitute for Yahweh's Feasts, also in violation of God's laws? (The Hare and Swine are unclean to you! Leviticus 11:4-7)

(3) Peter's Vision (It's not about the food! Acts 10:1-48)

(a) Peter has a vision in which three times God tells him to kill and eat unclean animals. All three times he says no. He refuses to eat foods in violation of God commandments. God then tells him, "*What I have cleansed you must not call common.*" Christians worldwide, and across time have interpreted this as a

release to eat anything they wish. If we read the narrative in its entirety we will see otherwise!

- (b) Was Yahweh now calling formally unclean foods clean? Has He changed His Word that endures forever? Of course not. The vision is not about food; He is referring to Gentiles. The entire narrative (read Acts 10:1-48) was to inform Peter that he was to go to the pagans and preach, starting in the house of Cornelius. It was not about changing food laws; the vision was a metaphor!
- (c) And as we see in Acts 15:6-11, Peter even gives his testimony and how God supernaturally revealed to him **(prepared beforehand!)** that he was to go fulfill what the Scriptures already prophesied, that the Jewish Messiah was also for the Gentiles. Nowhere in his testimony does he suddenly reveal that God has released His people to eat unclean foods! The vision was a metaphor!

(4) What about Paul? (I Timothy 4:1-4)

- (a) Paul's Admonition: Was Paul preaching that food laws had changed? Was Paul saying it is a doctrine of demons to still restrict foods according to the laws of clean and unclean in Leviticus 11?

1. KEY REVELATION: “foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”
2. Had Yahweh ever created unclean things as foods to be received with thanksgiving. Of course not!
3. Every creature of God created for food is good. ALL FOODS ARE PURE OR THEY WOULD NOT BE CALLED FOODS!
4. Paul is obviously referring to some other doctrine, some other restriction imposed by man.
5. How could Paul ever refer to the Laws in Leviticus, which he strictly adhered to, as “doctrines of demons”? He would not and did not!
6. The answer is clear; the doctrine of demons is any doctrine that espouses that you cannot participate in foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
7. When you know the “truth” you will not be fooled by deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.
8. How disturbing is it to consider that most of Christianity falls on the side of being deceived on this topic?

9. And consider how what is historically taught on this topic is the EXACT OPPOSITE of the truth.
10. Final note: lies about marriage are also mentioned here. The same deceiving spirits that have twisted the truth about food have also lied about about the sanctity of marriage. Does this sound familiar? Just turn on the NEWS!
11. Ask yourself, as a follower of Christ: "How could have I been deceived by such a spirit?" It's time to WAKE UP!

(5) Jesus Clarifies....

- (a) It does not matter what a man puts in his mouth as far as food is concerned?
 1. What you are taught: It does not matter what a man eats. It will not defile him.
 2. On the surface, that is a true statement. A bad food choice, or an unclean food choice does not defile a man.
 3. But does that truth then negate that you are still commanded to eat no unclean food?
 4. Also, is this teaching about food at all? The answer to both is NO, as you will realize when you keep His words in context.

5. [Mark 7:1-13] Context! *“Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”* Y’shua cuts right to the heart of the matter. There is no law in Torah that commands a hand washing before eating bread. It is a doctrine and commandment of men. Calling someone defiled because they don’t adhere to some manmade tradition is hypocrisy. Moreover, you can see that there is no context about clean or unclean food, just some guilt trip laid on Y’shua’s disciples for not keeping to tradition. These accusers are such hypocrites that their religious adherence to their own laws makes God’s real law of no effect.
6. [Mark 7:17-23] Y’shua goes on to explain that nothing can defile a man from the outside; it is the evil in his heart that then comes out of him that defiles him. And, don’t get hooked on the phrase in verse 19, *“thus purifying all foods,”* as this seems to be an added phrase not found in the older manuscripts, and of course is completely out of context. Just as with Peter’s vision, this is not about food at all, but about man’s refusal to make God’s laws a priority over their own belief-system. Back in

Acts 10, as you've learned, Peter had no interest in preaching Messiah to the Gentiles and God had to correct him on that wrong "man-made doctrine."

(6) Understanding Paul in Romans 14!

- (a) [Romans 14:1-4] There is likely no greater example of an area of scripture interpreted to mean the EXACT OPPOSITE of Paul's intention than Romans 14. This is the standard takeaway: *"Those who think they should adhere to Old Testament Food laws are weak in the faith."* This is what he is actually saying: *"Those who don't know the Old Testament Food laws and how they apply to them are weak in the faith."*
- (b) [Romans 14:5-9] Whatever you do, give thanks to the Lord.
- (c) [Romans 14:10-13] Whatever you decide, don't judge your brother for his level of knowledge and understanding. In the end, everyone must give an account of himself to God.

(7) The True Apologetic of Romans 14!

- (a) Throughout Christendom it is classically taught that what Paul is saying in Romans 14 is that those who are still under the delusion that they must adhere to dietary

laws of the Old Testament are those who are “weak in the faith!”

- (b) The key to understanding Paul’s context here is the phrase “*eat only vegetables.*” There was never such a restriction in the Torah to do so, but rather Paul is telling those who are mature in the faith (those who know exactly what the Scriptures say about foods they are permitted to eat—see Leviticus 11 and 20, those who can distinguish clean from unclean) to bear with those who have no clue, in other words, those who are weak in the faith.
 - (c) In their presence (the weak), if necessary, choose only vegetables along with them. You see, those who choose only vegetables do so because they CANNOT DISTINGUISH clean from unclean meats.
 - (d) This way they do not have guilty feelings that they might have eaten meats that are forbidden.
 - (e) Do not exercise your liberty to eat clean meats in front of them, as to not cause them to stumble. And the reverse is true as well. Those who don’t know, (the weak in the faith), should not judge those who do know.
- (8) The Holy Spirit’s Confirmation that Food Laws (kosher) still applies today!

(a) Let's set the stage... Galatians 2:1-21

1. Fourteen years after his Road to Damascus encounter, Paul goes to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus.
2. He went by revelation to share what had been happening among the Gentiles, but also to meet privately with church leaders.
3. Titus who was Greek was not compelled to be circumcised. False brethren were claiming you must be circumcised to be saved. And Titus' testimony was a statement to the contrary. Of course, Paul is not against circumcision, but against any doctrine that adds to the cross of Christ alone for redemption.
4. Paul was not seeking approval from leaders in Jerusalem; he was confident that he was called to bring the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter ultimately was called to the circumcised. (Of course Peter was first knocked into reality by his calling to go to the uncircumcised, as we have learned.)
5. James, Cephas (Peter), and John gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, affirming their ministry as being inspired by God.
6. Paul explains that he had to straighten out Peter's doctrine and hypocrisy in Antioch because he was

eating with the Gentiles until other Jews were around, then he withdrew and separated himself.

7. Note: you will see shortly in Acts 15 that Peter testifies to having received correction!
- (b) See Acts 14:21-28: Paul goes to Antioch and stays a while before heading of to Jerusalem as we see in Galatians 2.
- (c) [Acts 15:1-5] This is what is happening for the context of Acts 15. Men with bad doctrine are adding something to the “cross alone” doctrine of redemption. They are preaching you have to be circumcised and keep all the law to get saved! This is what the argument is against. It is not an argument against circumcision and the law; but against them being a REQUIREMENT to be born-again. Paul comes to challenge this bad doctrine and set the record straight. He shares his mission testimonies and gets down to business.
- (d) [Acts 15:6-11] Peter had obviously received his correction as he is the first to stand up and claim that the Gentiles came to the faith by grace as we all do! The law did not get the Jew saved and will not get the Gentile saved.

- (e) [Acts 15:12-18] Paul and Barnabas finish their testimonies and then James takes over the meeting, acknowledges Peter's contribution and affirms that God always had a plan for the Gentiles.
- (f) [Acts 15:19-21] The Ruling: Then James makes a ruling about the corrected way the law applies to new converts to the faith. There are three categories of laws Gentiles are to add to the practice of their faith. They are not singular laws, but categories, and the details will get filled for them like they do for everyone, by going to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Categories: (1) Idolatry (2) Sexual Sin (3) Kosher Food (No Blood). I would make special note that the early church was clear that "no blood" meant that "Kosher" laws remained in tact for God's people!
- (g) [Acts 15:22-31] The Official Letter: The ruling pleases all the leaders and of course the Gentiles are thrilled. They should not be troubled from anyone who adds anything to faith alone to be saved (like circumcision and the law). That point of view is officially rejected and the letter is delivered to Antioch.

Summary: BREAKING THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT

2. A Change in Direction

A. The Testimony

(1) Peter defends his actions! (**Acts 11:1-18**)

(a) The religious spirit is not limited to the Jews who don't believe. Even believers are unhappy that Peter went to the Gentiles.

1. Remember, Peter left Jerusalem in Acts 8:14-25 to see what Philip was doing in Samaria (Samaritans were not considered Gentiles) and he brought an encounter of the Holy Spirit to all those who had just been born again. That is when Simon the sorcerer had offered to pay for the power of the Holy Spirit and he was strongly rebuked by Peter.
2. In Acts 9:32-35, Peter moved on from Samaria to Lydda, a city eleven miles southeast of Joppa, where he healed Aeneas.
3. And then in Acts 9:36:43 he went to Joppa (Peter in Joppa Part I) and raised Dorcas (Tabitha) from the dead. He was having a miraculous trip, but it was about to get even more exciting than raising the dead.

4. It was in Acts 10 in Joppa that Peter had the vision and then in Caesarea he had his encounter with Cornelius, which changed his mindset about the Gentiles. It proved to him that Y'shua, the Messiah of Israel, was for all nations.
 5. Now he is back in Jerusalem and news that Peter had preached the word of God to the Gentiles had reached Jerusalem before his return.
 6. Yes, even in the Church, all of whom are Jews (those of the circumcision) up to that moment, the religious spirit is alive and well.
 7. The Jewish believers are not happy Peter fellowshiped with, let alone brought Christ to, the Gentiles, but Peter explains...
 8. The church is harassing the church: *"You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"*
- (b) He recounts for them his step-by-step testimony:
Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration +
Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony
1. I had a vision three times in Joppa, and it meant, *"What God has cleansed you must not call common."*

2. The vision was not about the animals on the sheets, but about the Gentiles to whom I was called to preach.
 3. My very own interpretation of the visions was specific: “...*God has shown me that I should **not call any man** common or unclean.*” Acts 10:28
- (c) Then Peter tells them about the testimony of Cornelius, which happened simultaneously in Caesarea, and how it influenced his decision to go and changed his mindset about Gentiles, and what happened to the Gentiles because of it.
1. He sent servants to me because an angel told him that I had a message for him. They arrived immediately after my blanket vision; it was all in perfect alignment as only God can do.
 2. You see, I wouldn't have gone to a house full of Gentiles (even one like Cornelius' which was filled with people wanting to worship our God—those who were God-fearers), unless I already had the supernatural revelation, “...*that I should **not call any man** common or unclean, that what God has cleansed I must not call common!*”

3. And let's be honest; where did we even come up with the religious mindset that what we have is not for the Gentiles—it's all throughout the Torah and the Prophets. We were meant to evangelize the nations, be a light unto the Gentiles. It's just a religious spirit that's been holding us back.
 4. So, the visions made it clear to me that I was to go with them to see Cornelius, and I did so with six witnesses.
 5. When I brought them the message of Y'shua, all of Cornelius' family and friends received Christ and the Holy Spirit fell upon them (as it did us at Pentecost).
- (d) The whole thing reminded Peter of what Y'shua said about John. 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
1. Here's the bottom line; if God intends to give the same gift to Gentiles, who was I to stand in the way.
 2. Peter testified to all those in Jerusalem, *"Who was I that I could withstand God?"* This is the same stance he took when he was TOLD NOT to preach in the Name of Y'shua when he stood at trial before Jewish unbelievers. And it was the same stance Gamaliel took when he advised those same Jewish unbelievers.

3. Thankfully, Peter broke through his religious spirit and so do the believers in Jerusalem after they heard his testimony. They ALL glorified God for what He was doing!
4. The Jewish believers became silent and could do nothing but come into agreement with Peter.
5. Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony

B. Barnabas: the EXCELLENT role model

(1) Barnabas and Saul Unite in Ministry (**Acts 11:19-26**)

(a) Barnabas takes another chance on Saul

1. Those who were scattered in the persecution in Jerusalem, especially after Stephen's execution, passed through Phoenicia and went as far north as Antioch, and even over to the Island of Cyprus.
2. They focussed on preaching to only the Jews.
3. In Antioch there were men who came from Cyprus, which is approximately 255 miles (400km) off the coast of Antioch, and from Cyrene in Libya, North Africa which was approximately 1500 miles (2400km) from Antioch.

4. They spoke to the Hellenists (believing Hellenists) in Antioch about Y'shua, and God used the Hellenists to bring many of those visitors to faith in Christ.
 - a) This is in contrast to the unbelieving Hellenists who wanted to kill Saul in Jerusalem.
 - b) "And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and **disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.**" Acts 9:29 NKJV
 - c) Remember: Hellenist were full on Jews who also maintained the Greek language and social culture.
5. News of these conversions reached Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to Antioch.
6. Barnabas was "the son of encouragement," a faithful man full of the Holy Spirit.
7. He finds God's grace in full swing and he encourages them to purposely continue to seek God wholeheartedly.
8. More and more converts came to faith and then Barnabas sets out for Tarsus to seek Saul.
9. Remember, Barnabas was the one who took a chance on Saul when Saul showed up in Jerusalem in Acts 9, after he was chased from Damascus shortly after his conversion. Everyone was apprehensive of Saul

(except Barnabas), thinking his testimony might just be a trick.

10. Saul was also chased from Jerusalem and headed home to Tarsus.
11. Tarsus is in Turkey, further north (and then west) of Antioch.
12. Barnabas seeks Saul in Tarsus and brings him to Antioch where they ministered for an entire year.
13. It was at that time in Antioch that followers of Y'shua were first labeled Christians.
 - a) In order to understand the timing of Paul's journeys to Jerusalem, it is necessary to integrate and coordinate Paul's testimony and call to ministry in Acts 9-12 with his visits to Jerusalem in Acts 15 and 21. To do so, you must lay in the timeline by using Galatians 1 and 2.
 - b) I've chosen to include a link to [A Chronological Study of Paul's Ministry](#) instead of writing one at this time. There are many good resources and I've found this one to be quite helpful.
 - c) The key takeaway here is that what might appear to be just days or weeks is actually many years!

(2) Financial Relief Sent to Judea (**Acts 11:27-30**)

- (a) A prophet from Jerusalem came to Antioch and predicted that a famine was coming.
 - 1. The disciples in Antioch sent resources down to Judea (and Jerusalem) with Barnabas and Saul as preparation.
 - 2. Remember they were using resources in Jerusalem up to that moment
 - 3. ...sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. *(This will be referred to later in Paul's testimony.)*

Summary: A NEW ERA OF PERSECUTION

3. The Persecution is Spreading

A. Rome is Now Harassing the Church

(1) Herod's Violence against the Church (Acts 12:1-4)

- (a) Herod (Agrippa I) gets in on the action.
 - 1. Herod (Agrippa I) is the grandson of Herod the Great (the one responsible for the massacre of the innocents at the time of Y'shua's birth).
 - 2. We've gone from the Jews harassing the Church, to the Church harassing the Church, and now Rome is harassing the Church.

3. Herod Agrippa is responsible for killing James the brother of John. James becomes the second martyr and the first of the original twelve to be killed for his faith.
4. Herod sees that his actions please the Jews (those who did not believe Y'shua was the Messiah). He is following in the footsteps of Herod Antipas (his uncle, the son of Herod the Great) who was ruling at the time of Y'shua's crucifixion.
5. Roman leaders often wished to please the Jews in some way—to keep them from rebelling.
6. In as much as the killing of James pleased the non-believing Jews, Herod Agrippa arrests Peter during the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
7. He places Peter in prison (his 3rd time in prison).
8. He is heavily guarded by four squads of soldiers.
9. Herod's intent is to keep him in prison until the Feast is done and then bring him to trial after the Passover.

(2) Peter Freed from Prison (**Acts 12:5-19**)

- (a) Peter has been incarcerated before, but this is his first time as a prisoner of Rome.

1. Other believers are in ongoing prayer for him as the situation is dire, considering what just happened to James.
2. But, the night before Herod is to bring him out of prison to stand trial, while he's asleep in chains between two guards, an angel appears to Peter as a bright light.
3. The angel wakes him by striking his side, as the chains fall from his wrists, and tells him to get up and prepare himself to run out of there quickly.
4. Peter was not even sure if it was real or if he was dreaming.
5. Nevertheless, he is led past two guard posts and through an iron gate that opened on its own.
6. He finds himself in the city and then the angel disappears.
7. At that point he realizes that it is real and that he has just been freed from what Herod was about to do to him, in an effort to please the Jews (likely he would have gone the way of James whom Herod recently executed).
8. Peter finds his way to where the believers are gathered praying and when he knocks, the girl who

answered is so shocked that she runs back inside to inform the others, before she even opens the door for Peter.

9. They don't believe her anyway; they think she's losing it!
10. She insists and they relent, believing she is likely seeing an angel.
11. But they investigate to find it is Peter and they are stunned.
12. He tells them how it all happened and asks they go inform James and the other apostles.
 - a) This is the other James (as James the brother of John is now dead).
 - b) He is the leader of the Church in Jerusalem, Jesus' next younger brother and the author of James. He is known as Apostle James the Less.
 - c) His predominant place of residence is in Jerusalem, as implied in Galatians 1:18-19.
13. Peter leaves and heads out. Meanwhile, the next morning there is chaos back with the soldiers, as they have no idea what happened to Peter when Herod asked for him to be brought.
14. Herod has them executed for insubordination.

15. Peter left Judea for Caesarea, where he stayed for a while.

16. This is the last we see of Peter in Acts, other than his appearance in Acts 15 for the Jerusalem Council .

(3) Herod's Violent Death (**Acts 12:20-24**)

(a) Herod Agrippa was not happy.

1. Herod Agrippa was not happy, but the people of Tyre and Sidon made friends with Blastus, the king's personal aid and friend.
2. They just wanted to live in peace as they were dependent on the Herods food supply.
3. Herod shows up in his royal garments and gives a speech. And the people pander to him... "*The voice of a god and not of a man!*"
4. This ends very badly, as instantly he is stuck down, eaten by worms and dies. (Notice that he is eaten alive; that is what kills him. As opposed to dying and then being consumed by worms.)
5. Why? He insisted on glorifying himself and not Yahweh.

(4) Compare Herod's response to Simon the sorcerer's...

- (a) Simon was treading on thin ice... "...**claiming that he was someone great**, to whom they all gave heed, from

*the least to the greatest, saying, “**This man is the great power of God.**” (Acts 8:9-10)*

1. But, Simon shifted and obviously moved away from believing in his own greatness and acknowledged Christ! *“Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized ...” (Acts 8:13)*
2. Herod made no such concession and Yahweh took him out!

(b) Related topics:

1. See: [Fire, Worms & Warring Angels](#) to explore some of the ways God institutes punishment against those who demonstrate that they will NEVER repent!
2. See also: [Disruptive Technology](#) to study the consequences of the unpardonable sin!

(5) First Mission Complete (**Acts 12:25**)

(a) Barnabas and Saul are about to become official...

1. Meanwhile, Barnabas and Saul (and John Mark) had been sent on a mission from Jerusalem to feed people in need (Acts 11:27-30).
2. Now they are back in Antioch from Jerusalem having fulfilled their assignment.

B. Prepared Beforehand

(1) For what?

- (a) Peter was created for a purpose and he was going to suffer to bring glory to God...
- (b) Paul was created for a purpose and he was going to suffer to bring glory to God...
- (c) Yahweh chose to use Peter to first bring the Gospel to the Gentiles...
- (d) Yahweh chose to use Paul to expand the Gospel to the Gentiles...
- (e) Sidebar: Yahweh chose a very different fate for Herod...
- (f) Your turn: Bring Glory to God or Worm Food?

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

1. In Acts 10:1-8 Cornelius has a run-in with an angel...

- A. What is odd about Cornelius, considering that he is a Roman soldier?
- B. What is his immediate response to the angel?
- C. What is he instructed to do and why?
- D. What is his response to the instructions?

2. Describe what happens to Peter in Acts 10:9-16.

- A. What does he conclude from his vision?
- B. How might this relate to his speech at Pentecost in Acts 2?
- C. How might this relate to Ephesians 2:10?

3. Two worlds begin to collide in Acts 10:17-23.

- A. Why are we not safe to come to any quick conclusion about the meaning of Peter's vision? (Hint: Did Peter?)
- B. What is Peter asked to do and why does he comply?
- C. What was common about what happened between Saul and Ananias and what happened between Peter and Cornelius? (See: Acts 9:1-19 and Acts 10:1-23)

4. Peter and Cornelius finally meet in Acts 10:24-33.

- A. What previous erroneous belief did Peter have that would have prevented him from going to Cornelius?
- B. What did God show him in that vision with the animals on the blanket that changed his belief? (Hint: This was Peter's final interpretation of the vision.)
- C. What is Cornelius expecting from Peter?
- D. Why can we be certain that Peter's previous belief system was not in alignment with scripture? (See: Isaiah 49:6; 60:1-5)
- E. What is Peter's answer to Cornelius' question? (See Acts 10:34-43)
- F. What is the outcome of Peter's visit? (See Acts 10:44-48)

5. Current Mindset + Vision + Reconsideration + Revelation + Action + Results = Testimony

- A. Use the following passages to prove this equation. (Acts 10:28a; 10:10, 13; 10:17a; 10:28b-29; 10:42-43; 10:44; Acts 11:2-3, 17-18)

6. Taking thoughts captive and renewing the mind is what Peter needed in response to his vision.

- A. Discuss how II Corinthians 10:4-6 and Romans 12:2 were demonstrated in Peter's response to his vision.
- B. Name three things you can do to take every thought captive and renew your mind? (Use: Psalms 51:10; 86:11; 86:12)
- C. How can you now be certain that Peter's vision was NOT about food?

7. The testimony about Peter and the Gentiles is not initially received well by Jewish believers in Jerusalem in Acts 11:1-18.

- A. Describe their initial attitude and how it perfectly matches Peter's original wrong mindset.
- B. What does Peter teach them?
- C. What, thankfully, is their ultimate response?
- D. How is their response indicative of II Corinthians 10:4-6 and Romans 12:2?

8. Barnabas proves to be an EXCELLENT role model in Acts 11:19-26.

- A. What two things do we see about his character in this passage?

9. Roman persecution of the church begins in Acts 12:1-4.

A. What did Herod do?

B. Describe God's supernatural hand over Peter in Acts 12:5-19.

10. Herod meets his ultimate demise in Acts 12:20-24.

A. What is his great sin?

11. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

A. How does this scripture play out in the lives of Peter and Paul in John 21:19; Acts 9:16; 15:7; and 21:19?