

“God Shows No Partiality”

Sermon Notes

10:1-16 Who was the main character – Cornelius or Peter?

10:17-33 God was on a divine mission

10:34-43 **God does not play favorites,**
But invites all peoples to be cleansed through Jesus Christ

10:44-48 The cleansed become priests of God

** So come into his presence, to worship and serve him.*

Next Week: Acts 11:1-18 “God Gave the Same Gift to Them As He Gave to Us”

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of February 4th-10th

Context

1. Under the Old Covenant, the people of Israel largely had a “come and see” approach to missions. There were to be a “nation of priests” who mediated God’s presence to the nations, as the nations came near to them. That said, there is a strong expectation in the OT that the nations will worship God. As John Piper has proclaimed, “Let all the nations be glad!”. Read Isaiah 66, which speaks of an expectation regarding non-Israelites coming into the priesthood of God. What do you learn in Isaiah’s prophecy?

2. Read Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. What standard did God have with regard to dietary laws for the Jews? Consider Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1); what risk did they face and what were they willing to do, in order to uphold God’s standard?

3. Read Acts 1:8. What was Jesus missionary plan for his apostolic witnesses? By Acts 9:43, how far had the gospel advanced? Where did it still need to go?

Observation

1. What do you learn about Cornelius? Some details about Cornelius fit together, while others seems at odds with each other. If you were a Roman, what would have confused about this Cornelius guy? If you were a Jew, what would have left you scratching your head?

2. What do you learn about Peter? What does Peter do here that is a pattern in his life?

3. There are two visions (10:1-16) and two voyages (10:17-29). What is similar? What is different?

4. One theme running throughout this story is that of priesthood and religion. For example, Cornelius prays and God receives his prayers as a “memorial”. What other themes of priesthood can you spot in this story?

Meaning

1. Divine messengers and visions from heaven should tip us off that something incredibly important is transpiring in this story. How so? Why did God have to go to such lengths to get his point across? What shortcomings did God have to overcome in his messenger, Peter?
2. What else do you learn about God's divine mission to save peoples from the ends of the earth? How is God the main actor in this story? What evidence is there that God is at work here?
3. Was it truly unlawful for a Jew to associate or visit with a foreigner? What traditions did the Jews build up around God's laws?
4. What is so remarkable about Cornelius saying, "*Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.*"?
5. Peter proclaims what the Lord commanded in 10:34 and following. What is so important to learn about God? How does God offer peace through the gospel of Jesus Christ?
6. Consider the biblical theme of clean/unclean. What do you learn from Mark 7:1-19? What do you learn from Revelation 21:22-27? What do you learn from Paul about our conscience regarding food in Rom 14:13-23? Consider these passages to reflect on how the work of Christ cleanses sinners: Hebrews 9:11-28; 1 John 1:7-9; Eph 5:26; 1 Cor 6:11.
7. Read the following texts to learn more about the change in God's standard regarding dietary laws: Mark 7:1-19; Mt 15:10-20; 1 Tim 4:1-5; Romans 14; 1 Cor 10:23-33; Titus 1:15.
8. What is the significance of what is recorded in 10:44-48?

Application

1. How does this passage shape your thoughts and beliefs about who can be part of God's "chosen people"? How does this passage shape any other biblical convictions that you hold to?

2. Where do you find yourself coming back to God, over and over again for cleansing? Is there sin in your life that you need to confess, repent of and come to Christ to be made clean? Reflect on 1 John 1:7-9.

3. If God has welcomed you into his presence, such that you fear him, serve him, and have believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, how will you live before God this week as a priest, as one member of the priesthood of all believers? Consider Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 13:15-16 or 1 Peter 1:15-16.