

# Sizzling Bacon and Saving Souls

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>1</sup> At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, <sup>2</sup> a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. <sup>3</sup> About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." <sup>4</sup> And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup> And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. <sup>6</sup> He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." <sup>7</sup> When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, <sup>8</sup> and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

<sup>9</sup> The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. <sup>10</sup> And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance <sup>11</sup> and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. <sup>12</sup> In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup> And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." <sup>14</sup> But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." <sup>15</sup> And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." <sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

<sup>17</sup> Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate <sup>18</sup> and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. <sup>19</sup> And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." <sup>21</sup> And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" <sup>22</sup> And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say."

<sup>23</sup> So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup> And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." <sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. <sup>28</sup> And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

<sup>30</sup> And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing <sup>31</sup> and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. <sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' <sup>33</sup> So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,<sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.<sup>36</sup> As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),<sup>37</sup> you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.<sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree,<sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear,<sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.<sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.<sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.<sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.<sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared,<sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”<sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. (Acts 10:1–48)

## Acts 1:8 and the Last Boundary Line

A. I’m thinking we’re going to take at least two passes through this amazing text.

1. Next time, we’ll get into more of the details of the verse-by-verse.
2. This morning, I really don’t want to lose the forest for the trees. I want to keep the big picture in view. I want to grab hold of some of the more sweeping, redemptive-historical, biblical-theological realities that are coming into play in this text.

a. The storyline of salvation is turning a very significant page here.

B. You recall, perhaps, that back at the beginning of this book, in [Acts 1:8](#), I said that we’re essentially given the thesis statement after which the whole rest of this book will follow. There Jesus is talking with his apostles before his final lift-off and he says this: “[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

1. Well, thus far in the book of Acts, we’ve seen the gospel advance through these apostles to those in Jerusalem;
2. we’ve seen it extended to those in Judea and Samaria;
3. and now finally the gospel is readied to break through that final boundary line here as it begins to roll on towards the ends of the earth.

a. In particular, we come now to the extension of the gospel to the Gentile world—to non-Jews, to those outside the lines they’d been used to drawing. God’s grace has no bounds. His good news in Jesus is for everyone everywhere.

C. And that is what’s made plain here with Peter and Cornelius.

1. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was not a circumcised proselyte to Judaism and full follower of YHWH, he was what they called a “God-fearer” (cf. [vv. 2, 22](#)).
  - a. He had sympathy for the Jewish religion and affection for the God of Israel, but he had not fully converted, you might say. He was uncircumcised (as we infer from [Acts 11:3](#)). He was not yet a card-carrying member of the covenant people. He had Jewish affinities, but he was still a Gentile.
  
- D. Now, at this point, the observant among us may be a bit confused. “Hold on a minute,” you might say. “What about the Ethiopian eunuch we saw reached with the gospel by Philip back in [Acts 8](#)? Didn’t you say he was likely a God-fearer like Cornelius here, a Gentile? Haven’t we already, therefore, broken this boundary?”
  1. Well, in a sense, I suppose we have.
    - a. But all of that happened, if you recall, without the apostolic witness and their official stamp of approval, if you will.
    - b. Beyond that, as we’ll likely consider more next week, with the eunuch there’s no mention of this speaking in tongues as we have here with Cornelius and his family and friends ([v. 46](#))—which was the way God seems to have been marking his movement across the barriers of [Acts 1:8](#), so that the apostles in particular could observe it in an unmistakable way (cf. [Acts 8:14-17](#)).
  2. So, yes, I do believe the Ethiopian eunuch seems to have been the first Gentile convert to Christianity, but it seems to have been more of an informal, grassroots affair.
  3. What we have here in [Acts 10](#), on the other hand, represents the more formal and official and programmatic advance in the plan of God towards the inclusion of the Gentiles everywhere.
    - a. With the eunuch we had a little appetizer.
    - b. Here now the whole menu is opening up (pun intended).
  
- E. This is likely why this narrative here in [Acts 10](#) is the longest of all narratives in the book of Acts. And it will even get rehashed again in [Acts 11](#) and [Acts 15](#).
  1. In other words, there’s something to it. There’s something worthy of all that space and attention.
    - a. And that something, I think, must be this: Here, at last, we have the gospel finally and formally breaking through that last barrier and people from all tribes, tongues, and nations are going to start coming into the kingdom of God through Jesus!
  
- F. This assumption is further borne out by that statement made in [Acts 11:18](#) after Peter comes back to the church and the other leaders and he recounts all that’s happened here with Cornelius.

1. What do they conclude in the face of it all? *“When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.’”*
  - a. In other words: It’s official! God has thrown open the doors of salvation for the Gentiles. Let’s go get them!

As we now prepare to dive a little deeper into this, I’m going to organize my thoughts this morning under two main headings: (1) The Vision; and (2) The Connection.

## (1) The Vision

### It All Hinges on a Vision of . . . Food?

- A. This truly is a magnificent movement of God that’s set in motion here in [Acts 10](#).
  1. But I wonder if you noticed: interestingly, it all hinges on this strange vision Peter is given about food and an expanding menu, if you will.
- B. Upon first read, it all seems very odd indeed. It’s actually quite humorous, when you stop to think about it.
  1. Peter’s on the roof of Simon’s place there in Joppa. It’s about noon. He’s hungry. He can smell the food cooking somewhere down below.
  2. He’s trying to pray, like a good Jewish Christian man, but boy is he distracted. His tummy is grumbling.
  3. And so he falls into a *“trance”* of some sort ([v. 10](#)). And what does he see? Not Jesus, not an angel, not some grand vision of God on the throne or something like this. He sees food. I love that! He’s hungry, falls into a trance, and sees food.
    - a. I would wager he’s not the only man to have ever had such an experience.
      - i. Paul Walton’s doing the men’s BBQ thing next Saturday. I’m already visualizing what it’s going to be like to sink my teeth into some smoked brisket. I could sit around and dream about that for a while.
- C. But what exactly does he see?
  1. Something like a great sheet descending from heaven with all these various kinds of animals in it.
  2. And then he hears a voice (presumably from Jesus, though we’re not told for sure) saying: *“Rise, Peter; kill and eat”* ([v. 13](#)).
    - a. I had a friend in college, Ben Potter, who loved hunting and he tried to claim this as his life verse. I don’t necessarily commend that to you, but it is in the Bible, so I suppose you could do worse.

- b. My friend loved the idea, but Peter not so much, right? He objects. Why? “But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean’” (v. 14).
        - i. With this we’re given a bit more detail as to what sorts of animals he must have seen descending in that sheet . . .
- D. In Lev. 11 and Deut. 14 of the OT, God outlines for his people those creatures which he would deem clean and therefore able to be eaten and those creatures which he would deem unclean and therefore not to be eaten.
  - 1. In the clean category, you had things like sheep, and goats, and cattle, and fish, and certain birds, and even certain bugs like the locust, or the cricket, or the grasshopper.
    - a. So, good news, if you ever have a hankering for a handful of crickets—maybe sprinkle them on your salad or something, get a little extra protein—God says go for it! How that made the clean list is beyond me.
  - 2. But then in the unclean category, you had things like camels, and hares, and pigs, and lobsters, and crabs, and vultures, and so forth.
    - a. And, you know, there are plenty on the unclean list I wouldn’t want to eat anyways.
    - b. But, there are some in there that, if I were Peter, I’d be rejoicing at this news, right? So I’m thinking: “Peter, what exactly are you doing, pushing back on this? Jesus is basically giving you permission here to put bacon on your burger. What’s wrong with you—telling him no?!”
      - i. Well, as we’ll soon see, the clean-unclean distinction was very significant for the Jewish people. He’d been observing the food laws his whole life and he couldn’t imagine suddenly just moving beyond them.
- E. But the heavenly voice is adamant. It meets Peter’s objection with an objection of its own. And this really serves as the punchline for the whole encounter, v. 15: “And the voice came to him again a second time, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’”
- F. Now, Peter, understandably, is a little “perplexed” by all this (v. 17).
  - 1. At first, he didn’t fully understand what God was saying with this vision.
  - 2. But, somehow, through the course of our text, Peter is going to make the connection from this vision about clean and unclean food to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God.
    - a. So, for example, he comes out in v. 28 and says to Cornelius and his family and friends: “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean” (cf. vv. 34-35).

- G. And if you're new to the Bible, you're probably just left scratching your head wondering what in the world is happening here? You don't see the connection.

1. And even if you're not new to the Bible, it's still hard to see the connection at first, isn't it?

## (2) The Connection

- A. So that's where I want to turn now. I want to help you see this.

1. And so first, I want to show you the point, so far as I can tell, of these seemingly strange food laws in the OT for the people of Israel.
2. And as we do that I think it will become plain by the end how Jesus declaring all food clean relates to Jesus going after the Gentiles with his grace.

### Various Proposals

- A. Before we really get going with this, I must say: Biblical scholars and interpreters have long tried to figure out the rationale in God's mind behind the clean-unclean food distinction, but no one-size fits all solution has really been found.

1. There are always outliers, flies in the ointment, or grasshoppers in the salad, if you prefer—things that don't fit the proposal.

- B. So, for example, some try to say that the clean animals are the ones that would have been more healthy and nutritious and the unclean would have been more harmful in some way. God was providing for his people a better diet, in other words.

1. But, if that's the case, you run into some real interpretive trouble when you realize that later in the NT, as we're now coming to see, God now says: "Go ahead and eat all the forbidden things, they're now all clean." If nutrition or hygiene were the issue, if it really was bad in itself to handle or eat such things, why would he suddenly say it's all good? It doesn't compute.

- a. Beyond this, you have statements like those from Paul in 1 Tim. 4, where, responding to those who are still trying to forbid certain foods he writes: "[E]verything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving." He's reaching back beyond the OT laws to the very creation of such creatures. And he says they're not inherently unclean or unfit for eating. They're good.

- b. He says the same sort of thing in Rom. 14:14, when speaking of various foods again, he writes: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself . . ." So, if it's about diet—concern for our physical health or something like this—these things would just be bad all the time, unclean all the time. But they're not. So that proposal falls short.

- C. So new proposals are put forward. Some have thought maybe the unclean animals are those typically associated with pagan cults that were active around Israel at the time.

1. But, again, if that was the case, how could the bull have made the clean list? Bulls were commonly worshiped in the ancient world.
  - a. That's what Israel is succumbing to with the golden calf incident there at the base of Mt. Sinai. It seems silly to us but it's not far off from what other cultures around them would have been doing. So why not put the bull on the naughty list? It doesn't work.
- D. Okay, maybe all the unclean animals are carnivorous. They're in that sense associated with death and blood and are therefore unclean.
  1. That works for a great many on the list, but then what about the camel or the hare? Maybe they had some really crazy rabbits in the ancient near east or something—hopping around taking bites out of people's legs and things. It doesn't work.
- E. So, at the end of the day, while not sure what exactly the rationale is for the various distinctions God makes in all this, it does seem that the overall structure here built within the ceremonial system of Israel was meant to keep at least four things in view for the everyday Jew and for the world looking in on the covenant people of God.
  1. These food laws were meant to be a daily reminder of four things: (1) Edenic Probation; (2) Moral Purity; (3) Holy Purpose; and Messianic Promise. And that's what I want to consider with you for the rest of our time here as we try to make the connection between this vision and Gentile salvation.

## Reminder #1: Edenic Probation

- A. I realize, from the go, you might not even know what I'm talking about here. Let me make sense of it for you . . .
- B. Theologians refer to what takes place there with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the opening chapters of Genesis as a "probationary period."
  1. As the first parents of the human race, freshly minted, they were without sin, in a state of innocence, but they were not yet fully confirmed in their righteousness. They hadn't done good or bad. They weren't positive or negative.
    - a. It was left to be seen: Would they obey God and elevate humanity towards a place of glory and life? Or would they turn from him and take us with them down into the doldrums of shame and death?
      - i. So it was a period of testing, a period of probation, which way will it go?
- C. And you know the story, I imagine, but have you ever really sat back and considered the fact that the whole thing hinges (yet again!) on this issue of food?!

1. “<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.<sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,<sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Gen. 2:15–17).
  - a. Now, let’s be clear: I don’t think this tree was magical. I don’t think there was necessarily anything inherently poisonous or toxic about the tree. In a sense, I think God could have chosen any tree for this purpose.
    - i. The point was to see what was in the heart of man. Would he let God be God or not? The tree in this sense has covenantal or sacramental or spiritual significance.
- D. Through it, it is true, they would come to know good and evil—either way the probation went.
  1. If they stood against the serpent and pushed him back from the garden, they would have known good and evil by siding with the good.
  2. As it is they came to know good and evil by siding with the evil. When they reach for the fruit and take that bite, their eyes are opened to their own sin and shame and they see God’s holiness but now, instead of a delight, it’s a threat—because they’re not innocent and they’re not righteous, they’re unclean. And, as such, they deserve his judgment and fall under his curse.
    - a. They would not let God be God. They would be god. And they fell.
- E. And, now, I can’t help but imagine that a Jew reading the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, would certainly at some point connect the dots, between [Gen. 3](#) and [Lev. 11](#) and [Deut. 14](#).
  1. In other words, in the garden, you had the clean-unclean food distinction first put forward as a test to see what was in man’s heart.
  2. And then, after the fall, you have the clean-unclean food distinction expanded and amplified as a daily reminder of that first test and the way it went for Adam and Eve and, really, for all who have come after.
    - a. For the first parents it was just one tree.
    - b. Now it’s all sorts of things. And the Jew is daily butting up against stuff he can’t eat and shouldn’t touch.
      - i. It tests the heart once more—will God be his god?
      - ii. But it also reminds him of the fallen state of humanity and, as we shall see more clearly, the need we all have for a Redeemer—for someone to stand where Adam fell.
- F. So, hit pause, and let me quickly apply this to ourselves.
  1. Will God be your God or will you try to take his seat?



2. Are you ready to surrender and obey, whatever the command, you trust him? Or will you only follow those things that suit your liking, that make sense to you, that sound good to you?
3. In that garden, Adam and Eve called what was evil good and what was good evil. And humanity has been making that same mistake ever since.
  - a. God seems unfair and unjust and unkind. And his ways are bothersome to us.
  - b. When truly he's the fountain of life and in his presence is fullness of joy.
    - i. Don't side with the serpent. Side with the Spirit.

## Reminder #2: Moral Purity

- A. This builds off of what I'd just been saying. Part of the reason God had them daily making these distinctions between that which was clean and that which was unclean in a ceremonial, external sense, was to get them thinking about their need to be clean in a moral, spiritual, internal sense.
  1. In other words: It was to get them thinking about the heart—the pollution that's there, the cleansing that's needed there if they're ever to be right with God again.
    - a. As they grew more accustomed to distinguishing between clean and unclean animals, they were to be growing in their ability to distinguish between clean and unclean intentions, thoughts, words, deeds, and so forth.
- B. You've probably heard it said that *"the way to a man's heart is through his stomach."*
  1. I must confess this is true for me. I almost proposed to Bob Coffey the other night at Home Group because he brought this amazing BBQ chicken to the potluck we were having. He was offering something for my stomach, but he inadvertently found his way into my heart ; )
    - a. In some sense I suppose that's what God is doing here. He's trying to touch the hearts of his people through the stomach, through these food laws.
- C. In fact, so much of what he does with the ceremonial laws in the OT seem to be for just this purpose.
  1. Take circumcision, for example.
    - a. It wasn't about the skin. That wasn't the point.
    - b. It was to be a physical, tangible reminder that you needed circumcision of the heart by the coming Holy Spirit in the New Covenant.
      - i. That's why when Jesus comes, circumcision in the flesh is done. Now Gentiles can come in without it. They don't need that. They can have in him what it was all pointing to: circumcised hearts.
  2. It's the same thing with all the sacrifices.

- a. The author of Hebrews says they never took away sins.
- b. They were actually meant to be a “reminder of sins” (Heb. 10:3), interestingly enough. It was to remind you that, if you’re ever going to get right with a holy God, something spotless, something innocent will have to be judged in your place for your sin.
  - i. It was to lodge that point deep in their hearts—so that when Jesus comes and he offers himself on that cross for sin once and for all, you’re ready to receive it. You know you need it.

(1) And then the sacrifices stop. They’ve served their purpose.

- 3. And, again, the food laws are quite similar. Part of the point was to get you thinking about your need to be clean at a heart level.
  - a. And once you get that in Jesus, the food laws are done. They’ve served their purpose.
- D. Jesus himself makes the same sort of point when he says to the Pharisees and Scribes who were making a big deal about external washings and food and all this: “There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him” (Mark 7:15)—the things of the heart.
  - 1. The external was meant to get you thinking about the internal. The need for clean food was to keep before you the need for a clean heart.
- E. So let’s pause and apply this to ourselves now as well.
  - 1. Israel lost their way from true religion as relationship with God from the heart, and they got all caught up in the rules. We can do the same.
    - a. We can focus on the external stuff: “I go to church. I read my Bible. I say my prayers. I don’t cuss. I don’t sleep around.”
    - b. God has some of our schedule and our actions but he doesn’t have our hearts.
  - 2. The danger with empty religion is we can actually be running from God while it looks like we’re running towards him.
    - a. So we can reassure ourselves as we imperil ourselves.
    - b. We inoculate ourselves to true Christianity. We get just enough of it to think we’re good, but not enough of it to truly be good.
      - i. We’re doing all the stuff, but we’re after something else.
  - 3. Does God have your heart this morning?! Is he the reason you’re here? To know him, love him, give thanks to him? I pray it is. Because that’s the point!

### Reminder #3: Holy Purpose

- A. The food laws were to remind Israel that they had been specially chosen by God and set apart from the other nations around them.
  - 1. This would have been a natural effect of their distinct diet. They would look different. They couldn't do all that those around them were doing.
    - a. While the Gentiles are over there having a pulled pork sandwich, we'll have to figure something else out for ourselves. We're set apart from them. We're "holy."
- B. This point comes out very clearly in the OT legislation about food.
  - 1. So time and again we read things like what he says in [Lev. 20:24-26](#): " <sup>24</sup> I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. <sup>25</sup> You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. <sup>26</sup> You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine" (cf. [Lev. 11:44-45](#); [Deut. 14:1-2, 21](#)).
    - a. The nations will know that I am a God unlike any other (holy) because you shall be a people unlike any other. They look at you and they see something about me.
      - i. And part of the way he's going to do that is with these food laws. It reminds them of their holy purpose.
- C. Now, why do I say "purpose"? Well, here's what we have to be clear on, as I've already been implying: God doesn't choose Israel in spite of the nations. He chooses Israel for the sake of the nations.
  - 1. You remember, this is how Israel got started with Abraham in [Gen. 12](#). "I'm going to make of you a great nation and I'm going to bless you. But it's so you can be a blessing to all the nations of the earth." Israel is to be a blessed nation blessing nations.
  - 2. Here's how OT scholar, Christopher Wright puts it: "In the Old Testament history of Israel there is a clear distinction between the people of Israel and the rest of the nations. Israel was the people whom God had chosen, called, redeemed, and brought into covenant relationship with himself. The nations did not yet enjoy that relationship. But—and this is the utterly crucial point—the whole purpose of God in choosing Israel was so that the nations would eventually do so. The overall thrust of the Old Testament is not Israel against the nations, but Israel for the sake of the nations" ([The God I Don't Understand](#), 100).
    - a. God doesn't set them apart to keep others out.
    - b. He sets them apart to bring others in.
    - c. When they look at Israel from the outside, they too are reminded of:

- i. Edenic probation—where we’ve all come from and the fact that we now live in a fallen world;
- ii. and they see the need for cleansing, for a pure heart;
- iii. and they’re wondering with Israel, how are we going to get that, where is it going to come from? (Which leads to this idea of Messianic Promise . . .)

D. But hit pause and let’s apply this next layer to ourselves.

1. Sometimes when God gets ahold of your life, you might come to enjoy the attention it brings, the way it sets you apart from others in some ways. It makes me feel better about myself. I’m not like them. I don’t do that anymore. Maybe I am wiser, kinder, holier.
2. And something very subtle slips in . . .
  - a. No longer are you interested in being holy for their sake—that they would see Jesus and come to know him like you have.
  - b. Now you want to be holy for your own sake—that others would see you and think you’re something. And you actually don’t want them to come in because then it would mean they’re really just the same as you at the bottom and maybe you’re not all that special.
    - i. So beware, as Kevin DeYoung would say, the “hole in your holiness”—it’s hollow, it’s missing something. You’re holy for yourself instead of for the world!

## Reminder #4: Messianic Promise

- A. Here’s the last and ultimate reminder in all of this. As with all the ceremonial laws in one way or another, these food laws were meant to point both Jew and Gentile towards the promised Messiah.
  1. Running through the entirety of the OT narrative, starting all the way back in [Gen. 3:15](#) in those moments just after the failed probation and the fall, is this promise of a coming Seed, a coming Offspring, the Messiah, the Christ, the one who will crush the serpent’s head but have his own heel bruised in the process.
    - a. He will overturn the curse by becoming a curse. He will lead us back to God by being cut off from God. He will rescue. He will redeem. But he’ll have to lay his own life down to do it.
- B. The promise is traced from Adam through Noah through Abraham through David and all the way on forward to the coming of Jesus.
  1. Here is the one who will finally fulfill the purpose of Israel in bringing blessing to the nations.
    - a. So Paul writes in [Gal. 3:13-14](#): “<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . . <sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles . . . .”

2. Here is the one who can truly purify the heart of man from the inside out.
  - a. So Peter will say later of Cornelius and his little group here that in Jesus God had [“cleansed their hearts by faith” \(Acts 15:9\)](#).
3. Here is the one who will, at last, stand where Adam fell—and, in so doing, he will move humanity with him beyond probation and condemnation to justification and glory.
  - a. It is no coincidence, I think, that the very first temptation of Jesus when Satan comes to him there in the wilderness turns yet again on this issue of food.
    - i. “I know you’re hungry. It seems your Father’s left you out here to die. It’s time to take matters into your own hands. Turn this stone to bread.”
    - ii. But he wouldn’t do it: [“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’” \(Matt. 4:4\)](#). He stands where Adam fell.
  - b. Neither is it a coincidence, I think, that the very last temptation of Jesus comes to him in the form of yet another tree that bears striking resemblance to that first tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As Peter puts it in [v. 39](#) or our text: [“They put him to death by hanging him on a tree . . . .”](#)
    - i. Oh how easy it would have been for Jesus to look at that cross and say with Satan: “The Father has abandoned me. He’s mean for making me do this. If he won’t save me from this, I will.” (cf. [Matt. 16:21-23](#)).
    - ii. But he doesn’t do that. Instead, he embraces the will of his Father, however hard and confusing it may be in the moment, and he trusts him through death. He stands where Adam fell.
      - (1) And, on the other side, when he’s risen up from the grave, he’s able to impart his victory to us by grace through faith in the Spirit.
      - (2) As Peter says in [v. 43](#): [“\[E\]veryone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”](#) We are forgiven. We are washed. We are made clean.
- C. All that the food laws were meant to remind us of and point us to has ultimately been realized in Jesus.
  1. So Paul writes: [“<sup>16</sup>Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink . . . .<sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” \(Col. 2:16-17\)](#).
    - a. They were but a shadow. He is the substance.
    - b. And now that the substance has arrived there is no more need for the shadow.
      - i. We have moved beyond it.
      - ii. And as such we can move towards the Gentiles with the [“good news of peace through Jesus Christ” \(v. 36\)](#).

(1) We can have peace with God and peace with one another because of him.

(2) Oh, and we can have bacon too : )

D. But seriously, you are so loved by Jesus. He gave up everything to bring you near. Don't push him back. Don't delay a decision. Come to him and find life . . . today!