

## The New Begins To Replace the Old-Part 2-Acts 10:1-23—3/15/26

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Open your Bibles to Acts 10 & let's read the section we're in as we study this transitional history—follow along Acts 10:1-10:23. [READ]

As I've said, it's hard to estimate the huge shift in the book of Acts & especially in this chapter as Peter went to the Gentiles.

So I've tried to soak us into the historical & theological background.

We've discussed God pouring out the grace of New Covenant blessings to the Gentiles beyond what He had promised.

And we pointed to the mystery of the church as pivotal in that—meaning the new revelation that believing Gentiles are fellow recipients of the New Covenant in unity with believing Jews.

To see that, we said last week that verses 1-8 begin to show how God prepared new members to add to His people.

The inclusion of Gentile believers as members of God's people in Acts 10 was new since they would not become proselytes of Israel.

They remained Gentiles—or nations, as we saw last week—& did not become Jews or Israelites by ceremony or ritual.

For example, Cornelius was called a God-fearer in verses 1-8, meaning he was likely not circumcised to become a Jew before this.

Then after he received the Spirit, he was baptized to identify with Jesus, but he did nothing to identify with Israel.

So Gentile believers began to be new members of God's people, not by becoming Israelites or Jews, but by trusting Christ's work for them.

And God was giving new revelation to explain this as the Apostles & early church leaders tried to figure it all out.

And if you ask why Israel was God's people in the OT, it was simply because God chose them by His grace to bring His Word & His Christ.

God chose them by His grace, not because of their righteousness or anything in them or about them.

His choice was for His purposes for His glory.

God had promised a Deliverer to crush sin & Satan & He chose Abram's Seed as the line to whom He would send that Savior.

That's why Israel was God's people & why the nations or Gentiles were new members added to His people in the mystery of the church.

Of course, some OT passages did reveal that God had planned blessings on all the families of the earth.

But such passages did not clearly state how God would do so.

That's why we treasure words like Jesus' in Luke 24:47 revealing how Gentiles get New Covenant blessings in Him.

And it's why we treasure Acts 10 explaining how God proved this!

The NT letters explain more later in time, but historically the first step in this new revelation was in Acts 10.

And the need for new revelation is why these New Covenant promises had not yet been preached to the Gentiles already by this point.

Embracing the mystery of the church required new revelation.

That's why this was not broadly preached to the Gentiles for 5-10 years after the church began until God forced this next step in Acts 10.

Peter's sermon in Acts 2 had offered forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name to Israel's generations & even those far off.

Isaiah 57:19 mentioned preaching peace to Gentiles as those far off.

So Peter knew Gentiles could be forgiven, but he did not yet know that Jewish & Gentiles believers would be one new body.

That required God convincing Peter that what had been unclean or defiled before was now considered clean.

And that leads to our 2<sup>nd</sup> overall point in Acts 10:1-23 & that is how God prepared new **methods to set apart** His people.

Last week we started walking through 3 ways the new began to replace the old in Acts 10:1-23 & we only covered the 1<sup>st</sup> of those.

In verses 1-8, we saw how God prepared new **members to add to His people** as a 1<sup>st</sup> point & that raised several questions.

So we answered why Israel was God's people & why the Gentiles were new members & why this wasn't preached already to Gentiles.

Those answers helped explain why Acts 10 historically reveals God was preparing new members to add to His people.

Today we see how God prepared new **methods** to set apart His people.

As a 2<sup>nd</sup> point overall & the main point for today, let's consider how God prepared new **methods to set apart** His people.

As with last week, I'm only going to cover that one main point & we'll walk through it with 2 subpoints to make sure you understand it.

By the way, subpoints are what arise when you ask questions & I realize I can't cover everything in my original outline.

But I'm thankful you are like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, searching the Scriptures as your authority & I'm trying to answer your questions.

So this week we want to unpack how God prepared **new methods to set apart** His people with 2 lessons to take away.

By **methods**, I mean laws & regulations & applications of principles.

And God **setting apart His people** is what He has always done to signify & separate & distinguish His people as holy to Him.

Today we'll explain that as the New Covenant began to replace the Old Covenant, old dietary laws were replaced by new freedoms.

Read Acts 10:9-10 to start seeing this new revelation. [READ]

This was on the next day, meaning the day after the angel had appeared to Cornelius to tell him to send to Joppa to summon Peter.

Cornelius's men must have started the 10-hour journey the night before & slept halfway & continued the next morning.

Otherwise, they left very early to be traveling & approaching the city by noon that next day when Peter received this new revelation.

The sixth hour was about noon, which would've been the midday time for prayer among Jews.

Houses in that era had flat roofs that were used for sitting outside & Peter went up to the roof of Simon the Tanner's house to pray.

But verse 10 says he became hungry as the next mealtime approached & he was wanting to eat.

But lunch wasn't ready yet—others were preparing it.

Read verses 11-12 where God used that to give new revelation to Peter about much more than food in that trance. [READ]

Peter saw the heaven or sky had opened up as it did for Stephen in Acts 7:56, with the implication is that this was from God.

Peter saw some vessel coming down, like a large sail of a ship or big linen cloth, being let down by four corners to the earth.

In that sheet were literally **all** the four-footed animals, meaning it was **all kinds**, all the categories of clean & unclean.

In it were also all kinds of crawling creatures of the earth, a particularly unclean group, along with all the birds of the sky.

Although some of those animals & birds were clean & acceptable to eat, the mixture of them together was unclean.

And read verse 13 for the controversial confrontation. [READ]

A voice came to Peter to get him up with commands to kill & eat.

The word for kill was used for slaughtering a sacrifice to God, some of which would have been eaten by the one offering it.

In some sense all meals were religious gatherings for Jews.

That was not merely because they thanked God for the food like we might, but because their food set them apart unto God.

God had given specific regulations for what was clean & unclean & what would sanctify something from being common to being holy.

And that was serious because approaching Yahweh God was not to be taken lightly or done however anyone wished.

Do you remember Nadab & Abihu who sadly did that in Leviticus 10?

Leviticus 10:1-3 says, “*Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before Yahweh, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of Yahweh and consumed them, and they*

*died before Yahweh. Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what Yahweh spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.’”*

Yahweh God did not tolerate approaching Him by your own methods.

He punished those two sons of Aaron with immediate death.

And He warned that He must be treated as holy & honored.

In that context is where He then said in Leviticus 10:10-11 that Aaron’s sons the priests should “*make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them through Moses.”*

Did you hear those categories?—the holy & the profane or common were one set & then the unclean & the clean were the other.

Anything unclean had to be cleansed, although some creatures & dead things & various other things were always unclean.

Something that touched them would become unclean & need to be washed or separated for some set timeframe before it could be clean.

But something clean would also be common or profane, meaning it was not unclean, but it was also not holy.

To make it holy to Yahweh requires offering a sacrifice for it or doing some other prescribed ceremony.

You can read such details in Leviticus & you can see which animals that were considered clean or unclean in Leviticus 11.

Israel could eat the animals designated clean, but they were not to eat the unclean nor even touch or have vessels touch anything unclean or they could become unclean themselves & need to be cleansed.

Leviticus 11 has 43 verses detailing those laws that were clearly important because they came after the death of Nadab & Abihu for approaching God not according to what He said.

But then you need to understand **why** God commanded all that, because He typically gave some kind of moral explanation.

So let's make that our **1<sup>st</sup> subpoint** today under that main point of God preparing new methods to set apart His people.

### **Takeaway #1—understand the moral principle that continues.**

When we read this narrative & see God revealing how the new begins to replace the old, we need to see what's not replaced.

What's not replaced is lesson #1, the moral principle that continues.

And in **one word**, that principle is **holiness**—the principle was for God's people to be **set apart as holy to Him**.

As the new begins to replace the old in Acts 10, the moral principle that continues is for God's people to be set apart as holy to Him.

Again—1<sup>st</sup> note that **the moral principle that continues is in one word, holiness**—for God's people to be set apart to Him.

Listen to Leviticus 11:44-45, which starts with “For” because it's explaining the 43 verses of laws for clean & unclean animals.

In Leviticus 11:44-45 Yahweh said, “***For I am Yahweh your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. For I am Yahweh who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.***”

Do you hear the moral principle?—because Yahweh is Israel's God, because He is holy, therefore they were to be consecrated as **holy**.

The word for ‘consecrate’ is the same root as the word holy & the idea is to be set apart, to be separate as distinct & sacred.

Israel was not to be common or profane, not merely like everything and everyone else around them, not even things that were clean.

To protect that, they were further not to defile or make themselves unclean with unclean animals.

And the final reasoning was that Yahweh is the true God who chose them to rescue them from Egypt to be their God.

Do you hear that moral reasoning?

Since God saved you & made you His, live holy as set apart to Him.

That made sense of Israel's dietary laws & it makes sense as applied in innumerable ways in the lives of NT Christians also.

So that's the kind of lasting, transcendent spiritual principle that you should be looking & listening for when you read OT laws like those.

We know that we are not Israel with a national constitution for theocratic government in the Old Covenant through Moses.

We know from Acts 10 & other passages that the New Covenant has replaced that Old Covenant.

But even those Old Covenant regulations had moral implications that have application to NT believers today.

So we first interpret the meaning of each passage in its original context by the author's intent & let that interpretation stand on its own.

Then **after** we've understood a passage in its context, we **also must** know why it matters to us today in the NT church.

We want to **apply** what God revealed to life today.

So then we turn to the NT to evaluate how those truths or principles **apply** now in the church rather than in a theocratic nation of Israel.

The terminology used in the vision Peter received was rooted in the summary of the dietary laws in Leviticus 11:46-47.

That whole chapter was the law of God regarding food that set Israel apart as holy to Him that was not to be taken lightly.

That's why we read Peter's response in Acts 10:14. [READ]

Peter's protest was respectful to his Lord, but it showed his shock.

He certainly would not do so & he explained with a statement of his lifetime commitment to obedience in that area of food.

Because he had never eaten anything forbidden, he would stand firm like Daniel in Daniel 1:8 & Ezekiel in Ezekiel 4:14.

Leviticus 11 was not the only place these regulations occurred.

In Leviticus 20:24-26, God also said, "*I am Yahweh your God, who has separated you from the peoples. You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that creeps on the ground, which I have separated for you as unclean. Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I Yahweh am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine." [See also Deuteronomy 14:3-21]*

That's why Peter insisted that he stay set apart, not unholy as that word *koinos* means, not common as if not devoted to God.

And the word for unclean meant not ceremonially fit for worship.

But God gave new revelation to overcome Peter's holy protest.

Read verse 15 to see that. [READ]

And again that voice from heaven came to Peter a second time to respond to his protest since Peter did not yet understand.

Here's what Peter needed to know & to obey—a description to know & a command to obey—and the description comes first for emphasis.

*What the God has cleansed* is the emphatic description.

Answering Peter's protest, heaven declared it all cleansed by God.

And what was cleansed was clearly what had been lowered down in that sheet that included unclean creatures of all kinds.

Regarding that, the voice commanded Peter not to commonize it.

God said—do not declare it common or unholy anymore.

And if it was not to be considered common or unholy, then surely it was also not to be considered unclean.

That's how God prepared new **methods** to set apart His people.

God's method of setting His people apart was no longer by the foods they ate & the associations of those foods or other things.

God was replacing those methods of the Old Covenant with new methods to signify & distinguish His people.

So that brings us to a 2<sup>nd</sup> subpoint for today & that is to **understand the new applications that replace the old.**

We said 1<sup>st</sup> to understand the moral principle that continues.

2-understand the new applications of that principle that replace the old.

As God prepared new methods to set apart His people, **2<sup>nd</sup>ly** **understand the new applications that replace the old.**

**2<sup>nd</sup>ly, understand the new applications of the continuing moral principle that replace the old.**

The new applications did not prescribe food to eat & not to eat.

The new applications declared all foods clean, as Mark 7:19 explained of Jesus' emphasis on heart rather than what goes into the body.

Mark 7:15 reports that Jesus said, *“there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.”*

When the disciples questioned Him, Jesus said in Mark 7:18-19: *“Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?”* [Then Mark added...] *“(Thus He declared all foods clean.)”*

In Mark 7:20-23 Jesus explained: *“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”*

Jesus was saying that the Jews had missed the moral principle behind the dietary laws about what to eat or not eat.

They had missed the emphasis of the whole Law on the heart that should be set apart to God that is shown in all that's done.

But as Mark later wrote under Peter's guidance, what became clear was that defilement comes from the heart & not from the outside.

Peter had not understood that until Acts 10:15 made it clear.

And to solidify it, God did this three times for Peter who had denied Jesus three times & then been restored by Jesus with three questions.

Read verse 16 again where that's stated. [READ]

That was the end of the vision, but it was not in doubt.

God had cleansed those animals—and thus all foods—to eat & no longer to be considered common or unholy.

The laws for what food a believing Jew could eat were replaced with freedom to eat whatever appeared to Peter on that sheet from heaven.

And how that gets applied in the following verses shows us why Peter & the Apostles had not yet gone to the Gentiles.

They had understood God's laws through Moses as keeping them separate from the nations to the extent that they did not eat with them.

God had designed His laws for what Israel could eat & not eat to set Israel apart as holy to God, as distinguished unto Him.

Since food signified Israel as God's people, the Apostles had not crossed those lines to associate with Gentiles at meals.

So even though they knew God could save Gentiles, they did not share fellowship with Gentiles.

That mystery was the new revelation for this big transition when Peter not only hosted Gentiles but also went to the house of a Gentile.

Sharing the same house & sharing a meal with a Gentile would make a Jew ceremonially unclean & unfit for Temple worship.

But that was the part of Old Covenant Law being replaced by the New Covenant freedom to enjoy new fellowship with different believers.

We now have such things explained in the NT, but Peter did not have that yet & Galatians 2 shows how he struggled with it.

But here God gave a divine prod to move Peter toward this transition.

We'll see more next week, but the new applications of this lasting moral principle focus on fellowship with people.

In verses 17-20, Peter was told to go down to the Gentile men who arrived & accompany them without misgivings.

New applications of being set apart no longer meant set apart as a distinct ethnicity or nation with rules for ritual cleanness.

Rather, new applications would bring ethnicities & nations together.

When Gentiles believed in Jesus, the new applications would declare believers from all nations as clean.

Get that—you don't gain cleansing from your sins to get right with God by any ceremony or ritual or effort of your own.

You can only be forgiven & welcomed by God through faith in Jesus' death to pay sin's penalty & His resurrection victory.

So holiness comes in relationship with Christ, as provided by Him.

And now people from all nations can come together in Christ as reconciled to Him & joined to each other in one new family.

Those new applications now focus on the heart of faith in Jesus as the one Lord & Christ that is worshipped by believers from all nations.

It's not that God was not focused on the heart before, but He was keeping Israel distinct nationally for greater purposes.

But now the new way to distinguish God's people is by their love.

As Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. **By this all men will know that you are My disciples**, if you have love for one another."*

Of course, Leviticus 19:18 had commanded Israel to *love your neighbor as yourself*, but this was a greater love like Jesus had loved.

That level of love for one another was a new commandment in John 13:34 & 15:12, heightened to be just as Jesus had loved.

Jesus had loved sacrificially & His people were to do the same.

This new commandment would set apart God's people to be known as Jesus' disciples, as those who love one another.

Many such new applications replace the old, but we might sum them up as **loving fellowship united in Christ**.

That's how you as a church radiate holiness—it's when God's people are set apart by *loving fellowship united in Christ*.

And I'm so thankful for how you model that in this local church.

The mark of God's people is no longer separation from different people, but **loving unity of** diverse people in Christ.

The church is not an ethnically distinct nation, but a multi-ethnic, international, unified body in Christ.

So Jesus will forever be glorified by people from every tribe & language & people & nation who share Him as their One Lord as future promises mention nations as part of God's plans.

We've noted this unity from Ephesians 2-3, as Ephesians 2:13-15 says, "*in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by*

*abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.”*

And this unified love among diverse believers is expressed in gracious acceptance of one another as each one grows.

In Romans 14:1-3, Paul applied this gracious love for one another as different groups worked through the freedom to eat all things.

*Romans 14:1-3 says to accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.*

Paul continued in Romans 14:14-15 by saying, *“I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.”*

In other words, food is not what sets apart Christians, love is—even love for weak believers that need to be better informed.

As new applications replaced the old, he later said in Colossians 2:16, *“Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink.”*

Since God prepared new methods to set apart His people, His people are no longer to be distinguished by food or drink.

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:1-5 even later describes abstaining from foods as false teaching, *“for everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.”*

So grasp God’s Word & pray & enjoy food with gratitude.

And know that by the time NT was complete, new applications of God’s people being set apart had fully replaced the old dietary laws.

Old regulations on food had become errors to be avoided.

The moral principle continued that God’s people are always to be holy & distinct & different & separate from the world.

God’s people are not to share the same priorities & values as unbelievers—we are to be set apart to Him & to each other.

But that holiness starts in the heart with what is treasured & worshipped & flows out in love for Christ & others.

So as we ponder how God prepared new methods to set apart His people, I pray you understand today’s 2 lessons about that.

I pray you grasp the moral principle of **holiness** that continues.

That 1<sup>st</sup> lesson means that if you trust Christ, you are set apart to God as His & are still called to be holy & not like the world.

And then 2<sup>nd</sup>, I pray you grasp the new applications that replace the old, especially those of loving fellowship united in Christ

So if you trust Jesus, you are cleansed from sin & joined to Christ & to other believers & called to love one another.

That means the church is your priority fellowship of sharing life in Christ together as distinct from the world.

If you don’t know that new life in Christ & are not cleansed from your sins, turn to Christ today & let us pray for you.

And now let’s all pray that God will help us appreciate & apply all that we’ve pondered in studying this passage.

Pray with me as we close.