

## Acts 10:9-23 NIV

### "The meaning of a ghastly dream"

"About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup> He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.

"<sup>13</sup> Then a voice told him, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.' <sup>14</sup> 'Surely not, Lord!' Peter replied. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.'" <sup>15</sup> The voice spoke to him a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.' <sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

"<sup>17</sup> While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. <sup>18</sup> They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. <sup>19</sup> While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'

"<sup>21</sup> Peter went down and said to the men, 'I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?' <sup>22</sup> The men replied, 'We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.' <sup>23</sup> Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests."



### You can probably identify with Peter's bad dream.

We've all "enjoyed" a nightmare or two.

**We've all also been really hungry.**

**On the other hand, we usually suffer nightmares after we've eaten too much.**

**This incident seems typical in some ways.**

Norma and I have fed many preachers.

Nearly all brought voracious appetites; none ever offered to help clean the dishes afterward.

**Did you know that a symbol printed on the packages of a popular brand of gelatin dessert relates to today's text?**

**Why did Peter have this bad dream?**

**Why, too, did he have such a hard time obeying the Holy Spirit's command?**

**Suppose you sit in a nice restaurant watching a chef prepare your breakfast.**

**You ordered your favorite omelet and pancakes.**

**You see the chef put a lizard in your omelet.**

In turning your pancakes, he drops them on the floor, picks them up, scrapes off the dirt, puts them next to the lizard omelet and serves you a steamy green omelet and floor-dirty hot cakes.



**How's your appetite?**

**Would you say along with Peter:**

**'Do you expect me to eat that?'**

**Suppose the Lord appears next to you and orders you to eat lizardy eggs and dirty cakes.**

**Are you munching yet?**

**Why did Peter face this test?**

**How can this incident possibly relate to anything happening today?**

**News headlines remind us daily that we human beings face some confounding issues.**

**Number one:**

**Battles constantly erupt in homes, churches, businesses, and countries.**

**Family squabbles started with Adam and Eve.**

Spats grew deadly among their sons.

**Now, quarrels threaten all life as per the China, Korean and Ukraine episodes.**

**Number two: Few poll takers include it as a subject of major concern, but people constantly check the papers and internet for obituaries.**

**Death fear underlies pandemic panics, the discovery of new viruses and the crime increase.**

**No one wants to openly admit the subject, but death-fear stalks all streets and country sides.**

Over the millennia of human existence, no person has ever solved our war-death dilemma.

No human being lives long enough, is powerful enough, wise enough, savvy enough to deal with our double-edged quandary.

**Only the Creator of life, heaven, and earth can help us.**

**Are we humble enough to pay attention to him?**

That's the real issue.

**Human pride clearly remains our greatest foe.**

**About 1800 B.C., God promised Abraham that if he would obey him, "all the families of the earth would be blessed through" Abraham.<sup>1</sup>**

**The Lord planned to help humanity with both our behavioral and our death problems.**

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:1-3

He purposed to do it by sending someone to share our existence—at our level.

**The Lord didn't just lean over heaven's balustrade like an angry parent and shout at us to "straighten up down there."**



Part of God's being would come to earth and live among us, not as a royal elite, but as a hardworking, faithful suffering servant.

**For his rescue operation, God prepared a people and special family for that servant.**

**As we've seen, the Lord began with Abraham. God chose Abraham's grandson Jacob, whom he renamed Israel.**

Descendants of Jacob's 12 sons became the nation of Israel into which God's servant, rescuer was born.

**Israel's descendants became slaves in Egypt.**

**Yet they multiplied to more than a million.**

God rescued Israel's enslaved descendants, gave them their own set of laws, His Spirit led them from Egypt to the land He promised Abraham.

**Israel's superior set of laws could have helped them avoid plagues and diseases that dogged and destroyed other nations.**

Their land would produce abundant crops and God promised rains at the proper season.

**They would live in peace.**

They did have to drive out the people living there and not intermarry with them. **Why?**

Those people had become so corrupt that their immorality infected them with deadly diseases.

**On that point, the Lord meant business.**

**There could be no compromise.**

**The Lord also gave the Israelites a strict diet.**

For health reasons, no compromises there either:

“Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession. . . .<sup>4</sup> These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat,<sup>5</sup> the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. <sup>6</sup> You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. <sup>7</sup> However, of those that chew the cud or that have a divided hoof you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the hyrax.<sup>2</sup> Although they chew the cud, they do not have a divided hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you.

“<sup>8</sup> The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses. <sup>9</sup> Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales“<sup>10</sup> But anything that does not have

<sup>2</sup> The repeated nibbling of rabbits made it appear that they were chewing the cud. Hyraxes are small furry animals found in the Middle East. Similar to mice and shrews, they also appear to nibble.

fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean.”<sup>3</sup>

**The Lord evidently restricted these animals because they are bottom feeders, feed on carrion, and/or are carnivorous.**



**You never want to chase away or mistreat garbage collectors.**

**Because of their diets, these animals tended to carry diseases.**<sup>4</sup>

God gave Israel numerous advantages and countless chances but their continued disobedience led to the loss of their nation.

**Because they lived under foreign rule, the laws the Lord gave Israel were no longer enforceable or applicable.**

**Though the humans beings failed, God’s suffering servant came and lived among us.**

**Recall how the Gospel of John begins?**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been

made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”

“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. . .

“<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

**We are not just here playing church today.**

**We honor the one who created all things and dwelt among us.**

**Jesus paid the penalty for our sin and he destroyed death for us.**

**He didn’t just bring longer life; he brought eternal life.**

**He didn’t just bring help for Jews; Jesus, the suffering servant, helped everyone.**

Isaiah the prophet had foretold (2:2 NIV):  
“In the last days the mountain of the LORD ’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.”

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 14: 2-10 NIV This section also describes birds that were considered unclean (14:11-21). Leviticus 11 gives a longer, detailed list.

<sup>4</sup> In the case of pork, known for carrying trichinosis; the worm can, of course, be eliminated by ample cooking.



**Regardless of their past or background, all who love God in Christ, now, put him first, love, serve, and forgive, gain access to God. In God's kingdom, cleanliness laws mean nothing.** "Are you so dull?" he (Jesus) asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) <sup>20</sup> He went on: "What comes out of a person is what makes a person 'unclean'. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of men's heart come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly." <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

**Jesus said that you can sum up all law in two commands:**

- **Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.**
- **Love your neighbor as yourself.**

Peter was so steeped in traditions he wouldn't eat with a gentile even though Jesus instructed him to go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**In his trance, three times Peter saw the sheet with lizards and the other unclean birds, fish, etc.**

**The Holy Spirit ordered: "Peter, kill and eat."**

**The timing of those gentiles at the door could mean only one thing:**

**That old stuff was passé.**

**Peter invited those gentiles in.**

**The next day he set off to enter the house of a gentile and preach the Good News to him.**

**It has been difficult for me to give up certain teachings and traditions from my youth.**

**It's been even tougher to give up greed, malice, envy, and arrogance.**

**Those impulses just keep creeping back, don't they?**

**We clean our houses and vehicles repeatedly.**

**Our minds-souls-spirits need serious attention.**

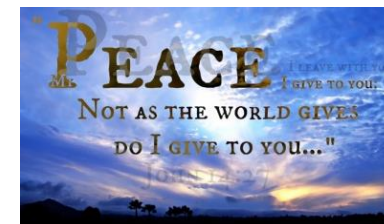
**They can defile us in God's sight.**

**My mouth needs close watch, too.<sup>5</sup>**

**I'm so busy cleaning mine,  
I can't judge others.**

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<sup>5</sup> The K you often see printed on popular brands of gelatin desserts means that the contents are kosher and approved by rabbis for Jews.