

Mechanics of Divine Guidance, 2-3, Acts 10 & 11

The second mechanic of divine guidance is through doctrinal rationales.

Acts 11:6 - ... when I had fixed my gaze upon it and was observing [*katanoeo*: to intensively examine, consider] it [the vision]

This vision contained several vectors which stimulated recall of certain aspects of the ritual plan of God. This is really a reiteration of the event which transpired in Acts 10. In that vision Paul sees in his vision all manner of unclean animals and beasts in what amounts to a tablecloth. The review is what we are reading in verses 6-7 of chapter 11.

In Acts 10:10 we learn that as Peter began his prayer he was in a state of hunger. As he entered into his trance, the vision presented him with food from the Lord.

In Acts 11:6 we see Peter trying to figure out what this vision could possibly mean. Therefore, in order to acquire divine guidance, you must analyze circumstances.

Peter did not understand the vision although it was repeated to him three times. Nevertheless, he will remember what he has seen as he gathers more information. However, at the moment Peter is confused and what happens next confuses him further.

The third mechanic of divine guidance is the Word of God.

Acts 11:7 - I also heard a voice saying to me, "Arise, Peter; kill and eat."

Acts 11:8 - But I said, "By no means Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth."

Acts 11:9 - But a voice from heaven answered a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."

Acts 11:10 - And this happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.

Jesus Christ tells Peter to eat the food and repeats it to him three times, explaining each time that if God cleanses it, then Peter may freely eat with impunity.

You see, Peter is a Jew who understands the dietary restrictions of Leviticus 11. They have become facilitated wheel-tracks which prevent him from even considering eating such food even at the Lord's insistence.

The implication here is that the Law is dead and grace is alive. Whereas all food is good, the Law restricted some in order to teach doctrinal principles.

Jesus Christ has done away with the Law by fulfilling the Law. Peter still thinks with old wheel-tracks. In similar fashion, he thinks of the Goyim as he does the unclean animals.

Rather than do what he is told by the Lord Himself, he steadfastly holds to the Law. If he is to receive divine guidance, he must orient and adjust to new standards for the Church Age.

Peter doesn't realize that he is a prejudiced person. It never crosses his mind that the Gospel is intended for all mankind including the Goyim—the Gentiles.

That which God has cleansed, Peter should not consider to be unholy.

It is interesting to see the Lord's perfect timing in this episode. According to Acts 10:30, the Gentile Peter was to give the Gospel to a Roman centurion named Cornelius. The day before Peter's vision, this officer, who lived in Caesarea some 30 miles from Joppa, had an angel appear before him and give the following instruction:

Acts 10:5 - Dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter;

Acts 10:6 - he is staying with a certain tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea.

Acts 10:7 - And when the angel who was speaking to him had departed, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were in constant attendance upon him,

Acts 10:8 - And after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Cornelius's exchange with the angel occurred at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. In Acts 10:9 we see what happened by high noon the next day.

Acts 10:9 - And on the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about high noon to pray.

Beginning in Acts 10:10 we get the original information about Peter's trance, vision, and mandate from the Lord.

Please note that divine guidance is from the Lord and involves what the Lord wants us to do not what we want the Lord to want us to do.

The timing is impeccable. The angel calls on Cornelius at 3 p.m. and instructs him to send for Peter some 30 miles away. Cornelius complies and sends his men to invite Peter to Caesarea. As they arrive in town, Peter has his vision which contains the message that the Gentiles are now candidates for the Royal Family in addition to the Jews.

Peter prayed to God in Acts 10:10, he considered the content of the vision in Acts 10:11, and he receives the same mandate repeated three times from the Lord Himself in Acts 10:12 and Acts 10:13. However, he still doesn't have enough information to know what God desires for him to do. God continues to provide information for Peter to consider and his perfect timing has Peter coming out of his trance at the exact time the three men arrive at his door.