

## **Real Christianity**

### **Acts 10:1-34**

The dreams and visions in this passage have had a profound impact on the history of mankind – as the gospel crosses the last divide – that between Jew and Gentile.

It tells us what Christianity isn't, and what it is.

#### **What Christianity Isn't – mark 1**

Caesarea was the centre of the Roman government of Judea. Jews hated the city. Cornelius, a gentile Roman soldier lived there – yet the Jewish people respected him because he was such a good man. Yet he still wasn't a Christian. That tells us that Christianity is not about living a good, moral, religious life. Something else is needed.

#### **What Christianity Isn't – mark. 2**

Peter was praying on the roof – probably for the cooling breeze and to escape the smell of the tanner's shop below. Whilst he's hungry he has a vision of a sheet filled with clean and unclean animals. The animals in that sheet would have disgusted an orthodox Jew like Peter, so he says 'no' three times to God's command to kill and eat the animals.

God wants Peter to take the good news to the gentile Cornelius, but a huge gulf exists between the two men. To go to Cornelius would have been as hard for Peter as eating unclean animals. This deep-seated religious pride and prejudice had to first be broken down. That tells us that Christianity is not 'I am better than you, 'holier-than-thou' religion.

#### **The Real Thing**

The food laws were designed to show us that we are unclean in a more serious way than eating the wrong food. We are unclean in our hearts. Christianity begins where we realise we have this problem, and that we can't fix it by living better lives like Cornelius.

Peter told Cornelius that he was not the answer to Cornelius' problem – but Jesus was. Religion tells you that you have to save yourself by being more moral – the gospel tells us that Jesus has done everything for us and we need to trust him, not ourselves. In Jesus all the unclean can be made clean.

#### **Responding to Grace**

Cornelius drew near to God and God drew near to him. God does not hide himself from those who want to find him. If you are not yet a Christian, now is a very good time to come to God in repentance and faith, trusting what Jesus has done for you.

If you are a Christian it is easy to withdraw into a Christian ghetto and view outsiders as unclean. But the Spirit and the Gospel impel us to be more like Peter – and reach out to those around us in love, and in word and deed, with the gospel of God's grace.