

clean. God was teaching Peter that not only Jews, but all classes and conditions of mankind, represented by the clean and unclean animals, could enter His kingdom.

V. 7. *I heard a voice*; from the heavens. *Arise Peter*. He was kneeling in prayer, 10: 9. *Slay and eat*. Peter was very hungry and was waiting for his noon-day meal (ch. 10: 10), when he saw the vision. Its form, therefore, is in keeping with his physical need. By asking him to provide his food from the vessel without making any distinction between clean and unclean animals, he is taught that the laws relating to food, and which had done so much to separate Jew from Gentile, were now to be abolished.

V. 8. *Not so Lord*. It was contrary to his usual practice, both as a Jew and as a Jewish believer. The early Christians did not at first fully break away from Jewish religious rites. It was only through time that the church gradually grew away from the past, and firmly took her stand upon the solid ground of faith. *Nothing common or unclean*, etc.; food forbidden by the Jewish law, Lev. 11 and Deut. 14. A Jew would almost sooner suffer death than disregard such laws.

Vs. 9, 10. *What God hath cleansed*; or pronounced clean. *Call not thou common*. The emphasis is on "thou," as contrasted with "God." If God would receive Gentiles, Peter should not raise any objection. *Three times*. The repetition was to impress the lesson deeply upon his mind.

Vs. 11, 12. *Behold*; denoting surprise. *Three men*; those of 10: 7, 8. *Unto the house*.

They were making enquiries at the gate of the arched passage way that led into the court, or square, around which the house was built, 10: 17, 18. *Nothing doubting*. He had been in doubt as to the meaning of the vision, 10: 17. *These six brethren*; present with him in Jerusalem, and who had gone with him to Caesarea. *The man's house*; the house of Cornelius, whose company Peter was now accused of keeping, v. 3.

Vs. 13-15. *Had seen an angel*; as in 10: 1-6. *To Joppa*; where Peter was preaching, 9: 38. *Shall tell thee words*; the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. *All thy house*. He had a God-fearing family, 10: 2. He had set before them a godly example of prayer, piety and charity, and by the grace of God they were fitted for the reception of the larger truth of the Gospel. The family of Cornelius was a living illustration of the truth of Peter's words in last Lesson, 10: 34, 35. *As I began to speak*; and even while speaking. *Fell on them*; upon the Gentiles. *As on us*; at Pentecost, 2: 4. *At the beginning*; about ten years before. This now was the "Gentile Pentecost," and it led Peter to recall the words of Jesus, v. 16, which were richer and fuller than he had supposed.

Peter, having given the facts, draws the conclusion that it was plainly the will of God that the Gentiles should be received. The church took the same view, and the difficulty, for a time at least, was removed, (vs. 16-18). Christianity from the beginning showed itself to be a world religion.

APPLICATION

But Peter expounded the matter, v. 4. Peter has learned the lesson of gentleness in the school of Christ, and teaches us, by his example, the same virtue. We owe to Christian brethren a patient, courteous explanation of our conduct as workers in the church, and ought, so far as possible, to conciliate them. If all the members of a congregation would manifest the spirit of Peter in discussing its affairs and enterprises, there would be few church quarrels. A great many disputes arise out of misunderstandings, and when the case is explained, the cause of disagreement vanishes.

I was . . . praying: I saw a vision, v. 5. It is the men who pray who see visions. Prayer is a real cause in the spiritual world. It brings down an answer from heaven. The testimony of men to the fact of intercourse with God, is entitled to as much respect as their testimony to facts in the physical universe. It is not a good reason for rejecting testimony that it does not correspond with our own experience. We accept as true the conclusions of some great mathematician concerning the path and speed of the heavenly bodies, although we cannot follow him in his reasonings. It is equally reason-