

A Monumental Change.
Acts 10:9-23.
Sunday morning, May 23, 2010.

I. Grasping and appreciating this moment.

- A. This passage of Scripture more than any other constitutes a “crossing the Continental Divide” of redemptive history.
 - 1. On the East side of this imaginary line across the American continent all rain and snow water runs Eastward and ends up becoming a part of the Atlantic Ocean.
 - 2. On the West side of this imaginary line all rain and snow waters flow westward and end up becoming a part of the Pacific Ocean.
 - 3. In crossing the Continental Divide, a whole new direction and destiny become the norm of all rivers and streams.
- B. Peter, in coming to the house of Simon the Tanner, unbeknown to himself, had crossed the Continental Divide of redemptive history.
 - 1. On the far side (from our perspective) of this divide, all waters ran through the channels of Jewish customs and Mosaic statutes into the basin of God’s Old Covenant people. The Church up to this point was still a Jewish church, for “salvation is from the Jews” as the Lord Jesus had said in John 4:22.
 - 2. On this side of this divide (historically speaking) the waters no longer flow through distinctly Jewish channels. Circumcision, dietary laws, laws governing clean and unclean, Jewish calendar and holidays all stand abandoned. They have become unimportant at best, and stand largely sidelined. You are none the better for observing these customs, and none the worse for not observing them. Faith working by love is now carving new channels for the outworking of God’s redemptive purposes. No longer do the waters flow into a distinctly Jewish basin; now they flow into the basin of New Jerusalem and the Israel of God. Gal. 6:16 and Gal. 4:26 which is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. Something of crossing this divide had come to Peter even before he had the vision of the rooftop. Providentially Peter had ended up in the house of Simon the Tanner as he spent many days in Joppa. Acts 9:43. Simon by way of his profession had to work with the hides of dead cattle. This rendered him according to Mosaic customs perpetually unclean, and everything Simon came in contact with in his house was perpetually unclean as well. Simon did not exactly run a Kosher household! His house was no doubt outside the city of Joppa, and it was by the seaside so that the sea breezes could disperse the unpleasant odors associated with the tanning process. The Holy Spirit has Peter being lodged in the midst of all this uncleanness as if to say: “It is OK Peter; we’ve crossed the Continental Divide.”

II. Peter’s vision on the rooftop.

- A. Note how the Lord sets the stage for this vision as He imparts to Peter a strong desire for food; Peter becomes very hungry, and he is possessed of a strong desire to partake of the food that will be set before him.

- B. There is a catch however. The vessel let down out of heaven represents the new reality on this side of the Continental Divide. It is a picture of New Jerusalem and the Israel of God. All the waters of every imaginable kind of humanity flow into it; they are represented by every imaginable kind of animal.
- C. Peter was not used to eating out of such a vessel. He was expecting a vessel in which all creatures conformed to Jewish tradition and Mosaic code. So he protests: "I have never eaten anything common or unclean." Peter wanted a distinctly Jewish vessel with only clean animals according to Mosaic code. The Lord tells him in so many words: "That ship has sailed; we've crossed the Continental Divide, and we are now dealing with a whole new set of realities." "What God has declared clean, you must not call common or unclean."
- D. In Old Covenant times the laws governing clean and unclean foods, as well as the laws governing ceremonial cleanliness, served the purposes of national distinction; separateness from the surrounding nations, and consecration to the Lord who gave these statutes to them.
It was so that Israel might remain a distinct nation and people to bring the promised deliverer into the world. That having been accomplished, there was now no need for her to remain a separate entity; she could be absorbed now into the universal Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. OT statutes fall away.
- E. The vision is repeated three times.
 1. In Genesis 41 the Pharaoh of Egypt had two dreams signifying the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine which were about to come on that part of the world. Joseph interprets the dreams with God's help and shows Pharaoh that the two dreams are one. The fact that Pharaoh dreamed the same thing twice signifies that the thing is established by God and is therefore certain. Gen. 41:42.
 2. In the Lord's supper the Lord signifies the same truth twice, first under the imagery of the bread, then under that of the cup, so as to impress our senses all the more, and to show us the certainty of the things signified.
 3. Here the vision is repeated three times. We should not miss the monumental significance and certainty of what is signified here. We should not miss the absolute imperative nature of our obedience to it. To secure such obedience all the more, the great judgment of AD 68-70 befell the Jewish nation, effectively bringing to an end the Jewish nature of the Church.

III. What God has called clean...

- A. By way of application we should not leave this passage without feeling the weight of what God had determined. Peter had no business going against this. An enormous prejudice had to be overcome in the mind of Peter to effect this change in his thinking. Hence the threefold repeating of the vision.
- B. To us too comes this word: "What God has called...true," we have no business calling untrue. No matter what the world in its wisdom may say to us.
- C. "What God has called... right," we have no business calling wrong notwithstanding the demands of popular culture, and vice versa.
- D. The Christian lines up under the authority of God's word, and in doing so he finds its power, truth and life. Do you need to return to this place?