

Sacred Roots: Worship that Breaks Barriers (Week 6)

Unearthing Who We Are, Planting Who We Will Be

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I. Introduction

"True worship is about breaking the barriers of tradition and allowing the spirit to move freely."

- Icebreaker: Have you or someone you know ever experienced a moment of worship that was so profound it led to "breaking certain rules" or boundaries? How did that experience influence your perception of worship, place and personal beliefs?
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II. Background and Setting

A. Who is Cornelius? The Roman Centurion/ The Rule Breaker/ Renegade

- **Cornelius was a Roman Centurion, a military officer with a hundred soldiers under his command.**
- **He was stationed in Caesarea, a coastal city in the Roman province of Judea.**
- **Cornelius was a devout and God-fearing man, along with his entire household. The Jewish community respected him for his piety and acts of charity.**

B. Historical Context:

Roman Occupation of Israel:

- Began in 63 BCE under Roman general Pompey.
- Israel became a province of the Roman Empire.
- Imposition of heavy taxes on the population.
- **Roman military presence to maintain control.**
- Religious tensions between **Jewish monotheism** and **Roman polytheism.**
 - JM Characteristics- 1 God, Covenant with God (Israel the Chosen people), Prophets (Gods mouthpiece to people) & Worship and Prayer
 - RM- Many gods and goddesses, Anthropomorphic gods (Roman gods depicted as human-like figures), festivals and sacrifices in *THEIR* name

Status of Centurions:

- Centurions were Roman army officers.
- Responsible for commanding a century (around 80-100 soldiers).
- Selected based on merit and leadership abilities.
- Played a crucial role in maintaining discipline and training soldiers.
- Highly respected by both superiors and subordinates.
- **Some Centurions are shown to be interested in local religious practices, as seen in the case of Cornelius in Acts 10.**

C. Read Acts 10:1-8 - Describe Cornelius' character and devotion to God

III. Peter's Vision and Cornelius' Vision (Acts 10:9-23)

A. Read Acts 10:9-16 - Discuss the significance of Peter's vision of the sheet with unclean animals

- **Breaking Traditional Jewish Dietary Laws:** In Peter's vision, he saw a large sheet descending from heaven with various unclean animals according to Jewish dietary laws. God instructed Peter to "kill and eat," which challenged the strict dietary restrictions observed by Jews for generations.
- **A Message of Inclusivity:** The vision's significance lies in its symbolic message about God's impartiality and inclusivity. By presenting unclean animals and instructing Peter to eat them, God demonstrated that He was **breaking down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles**, signifying that salvation and acceptance into the Christian faith were open to all, regardless of their ethnic background.
- **Redefining Clean and Unclean:** The vision urged Peter to reconsider his perception of what was considered clean and unclean. It emphasized that in the new covenant through Christ, the distinctions between clean and unclean foods were no longer spiritually relevant.

Q: How can we challenge the rigid traditions and habits that may lead us to treat others as "common" or outsiders? How can we break away from the urge to do everything the same way and instead embrace diversity?

B. Read Acts 10:17-23 - Explore Cornelius' response to the angel's message and his obedience to seek Peter

IV. Peter's Arrival at Cornelius' House (Acts 10:24-33)

A. Read Acts 10:24-27 - Discuss Cornelius' anticipation and gathering of his relatives and close friends

B. Read Acts 10:28-33 - Explore Peter's initial reluctance and his realization of God's impartiality

V. Peter's Sermon and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:34-48)

A. Read Acts 10:34-43 - Examine the main points of Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his household

(v.35-36) **Worship Makes You an Unexpected Recipient**

B. Discuss the significance of Cornelius' conversion and the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan

C. Read Acts 10:44-48 - Describe the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius' household

D. Reflect on the similarities between this event and the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

Conclusion & Notes:
