
What Did the Unclean Animals Represent? (Acts 10:9-15)

Question: What did the sheet containing the unclean animals, which the Apostle Peter saw descending from heaven in Acts 10:9-15, symbolize?

Answer: Let’s take a closer look.

> *Acts 10:9-15*
> *“On the following day, as they were traveling and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray around noon.*
>
> *10 He became very hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance.*
>
> *11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners,*

> *12 containing all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds.*
>
> *13 Then a voice came to him, ‘Get up, Peter, kill and eat.’*
>
> *14 But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord; I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’*
>
> *15 The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’”*

In this vision, the unclean animals represented Gentile people, who were originally considered unclean in God’s sight and could not inherit His promises or participate in His service.

Through this vision, God was showing Peter that the Gentiles were no longer unclean and that he should not hesitate to bring them the Gospel.

In short, the unclean animals symbolized unclean people from the Gentiles. But how can we be sure? Let’s look at Acts 10:14-15 and 10:28.

> *Acts 10:14-15*
> *“But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord; I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’*
> *15 Again, a voice spoke to him, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’”*

> *Acts 10:28*
> *“He said to them, ‘You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with or visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.’”*

Clearly, Peter received a revelation from the Holy Spirit: the unclean animals represented people whom the Jews had considered unclean before God—that is, the Gentiles, including Cornelius and his household.

This shows that in God’s grace, there is no favoritism. No one is excluded, whether Jew or Gentile.

> *Galatians 3:28*
> *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

It’s also worth noting that the animals themselves were now considered clean. In the New Covenant, there is no longer a prohibition against eating animals that were once forbidden in the Old Covenant. They were only symbolic of people. In short, the animals represented humanity, not literal impurity.

May the Lord help us understand this truth.

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