

# Acts 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

## Analysis

**I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision.** Peter begins his defense of baptizing Cornelius by describing his supernatural experience that challenged Jewish exclusivism. The detail "in the city of Joppa" establishes the geographical setting and connects to Acts 10:9-16. "Praying" (proseuchomenos, προσευχόμενος) indicates this vision came during devoted communion with God—divine revelation often accompanies seeking God's face.

"In a trance" (en ekstasei, ἐν ἐκστάσει) means literally "standing outside oneself"—a state where normal consciousness is suspended for direct divine communication. This wasn't meditation or imagination but God-initiated revelation. The vision of "a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners" contained clean and unclean animals, symbolically representing all peoples and nations.

Peter's detailed recounting demonstrates the profundity of this revelation: God was dismantling the ceremonial barriers separating Jews from Gentiles. The repeated vision (three times) and the Spirit's explicit command to accompany the Gentile messengers left no doubt about God's new direction. This verse marks a pivotal moment in Acts—the gospel breaking free from Jewish-only restrictions to become genuinely universal.

## Historical Context

---

This account comes from Acts 11, where Peter defends his controversial actions to Jerusalem church leaders who criticized him for eating with uncircumcised Gentiles (11:2-3). The incident occurred around AD 40-41, approximately a decade after Pentecost, when the church was still predominantly Jewish and struggling with the implications of Gentile conversion.

Joppa (modern Jaffa) was a Mediterranean coastal city with mixed Jewish and Gentile populations. Peter was staying with Simon the tanner (Acts 10:6), a detail indicating his growing openness to ceremonially unclean occupations. Cornelius, the Roman centurion in Caesarea, represented the first documented case of direct Gentile conversion without prior Jewish proselytization.

The Jerusalem church's resistance to Peter's actions reveals how difficult it was for first-century Jewish Christians to accept that Gentiles could be saved without first becoming Jewish proselytes. The ceremonial food laws had served for centuries as identity markers separating God's people from pagan nations. Peter's vision declaring all foods clean (10:15) symbolized the obsolescence of these barriers in Christ. This controversy was ultimately resolved at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

## Related Passages

---

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

---

1. How does God use prayer as the context for revelation and direction in our lives?

2. What cultural or traditional barriers prevent us from obeying God's call to reach all people?
3. How can we discern between personal preference and divine conviction regarding cultural practices?
4. What does this passage teach about God's heart for global missions and ethnic reconciliation?
5. How should we respond when God challenges our comfortable religious traditions?

## Interlinear Text

---

Ἐγὼ	ἤμην	ἐν	πόλει	Ἰόππῃ	προσευχόμενος	καὶ	εἶδον
<b>I</b>	<b>was</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>the city</b>	<b>of Joppa</b>	<b>praying</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>I saw</b>
G1473	G2252	G1722	G4172	G2445	G4336	G2532	G1492
ἐν	ἐκστάσει	ὄραμα	καταβαῖνον	σκεῦός	τι	ὥς	
<b>in</b>	<b>a trance</b>	<b>a vision</b>	<b>descend</b>	<b>vessel</b>	<b>A certain</b>	<b>as it had been</b>	
G1722	G1611	G3705	G2597	G4632	G5100	G5613	
ὀθόνην	μεγάλην	τέσσαρσιν	ἀρχαῖς	καθιεμένην	ἐκ	τοῦ	
<b>sheet</b>	<b>a great</b>	<b>by four</b>	<b>corners</b>	<b>let down</b>	<b>from</b>	<b>G3588</b>	
G3607	G3173	G5064	G746	G2524	G1537		
οὐρανοῦ	καὶ	ἦλθεν	ἄχρις	ἐμοῦ·			
<b>heaven</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>it came</b>	<b>even</b>	<b>to me</b>			
G3772	G2532	G2064	G891	G1700			

---

From KJV Study • [kjevstudy.org](http://kjevstudy.org)