

39 AD – PAUL RETURNS FROM ARABIA – VISITS PETER AND JAMES

“Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.” (Isaiah 2 v 8)

PAUL SOJOURNS IN ARABIA

Paul describes what happened:

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem...” (Gal 1:15-18)

We consider it likely most of the three years was spent in Arabia with a brief stop in Damascus then on to Jerusalem. Paul was a wanted man in Damascus. If he had stayed a long time it is likely his enemies would have discovered him and tried to kill him. But we can't be dogmatic.

The main point is since we know Paul was converted in **36 AD** we can add three years (according to his report of his whereabouts) to make it **39 AD** when Paul was in Jerusalem.

PAUL SEES PETER AND JAMES THE LESSOR¹

Paul continues with the travelogue:

“...I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ” (Gal. 1:18-22)

James the brother of the LORD was later the author of the Book of James. Paul calls him an apostle – although he was not one of the twelve². Paul is detailing this brief stop in Jerusalem to emphasize a point – that the gospel he received on his three year retreat in the desert was not inspired by teachings received from Christ's apostles. In fact, it was a deeper revelation.

¹ This was not the famous original apostle 'James the Just': elder brother of John, son of Zebedee, reputed leading apostle of the church in Jerusalem beside Peter.

² Luke 6:14-15

PROPHECY OF ISAIAH 2 V 8

“Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.” (Isaiah 2 v 8)

When Paul visited Jerusalem it was nine years since the Cross and six years since the stoning of Stephen. Most of the Christians had scattered from Jerusalem. (See our paper [33 AD](#))

What were the apostles doing in Jerusalem if the sheep of the flock were scattered throughout the land? After the resurrection but before the ascension the disciples had gone back to fishing in Galilee. The LORD appeared to them and sent them to Jerusalem to tarry a while until they were endued with power. Specifically Peter was commanded by the LORD three times: **‘Feed my sheep’?**³

They went back to Jerusalem and Holy Spirit power fell at Pentecost. Some like Matthew put the time to good use and wrote the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew.

Philip, Peter, and John went on a short trip to Samaria (Acts 8). Peter took a mission to Caesarea to introduce the Gentiles to the gospel (Acts 10). That was it.

Jesus commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. In spite of the persecution of Stephen the apostles put down roots in Jerusalem.

Over the years it appears the apostles had become a living shrine that pilgrims came up to Jerusalem, like Paul, to meet and greet. They had become living holy relics. Pilgrims came and sat at their feet they would recount the tales of their journeys with Christ.

Isaiah describes the History of the Modern World 1AD to 1292 AD from God’s perspective. According to the prophecy for 39 AD this is how God saw things:

“Their land also is full of idols” – the Christians elevated the apostles on a pedestal

“they worship the work of their own hands” – the apostles were ‘hands’ – they were meant to do work – instead they were worshiped as the ‘hands of the LORD’ – the ‘holy apostles’.

“that which their own fingers have made” – the apostles were complicit in this failure – by staying in Jerusalem they forced the sheep to make the journey to see them.

³ John 21

SPIRITUAL NUMBER ANALYSIS

For a mind that has wisdom please read on. See truth from another perspective.

PART ONE

Chapter **2** of Isaiah is the **2nd** chapter of The Prophets.

The spiritual number **2** means 'Division' or 'Discern'

This marks the next turning point in the life of Paul. (See our paper [36 AD.](#))

It also marks a turning point in the church, because Paul will be the force to take the gospel into Asia Minor and Greece. The original apostles, the 'holy relics', won't be in the picture.

PART TWO

Isaiah **2 v 8** is the **17,694th** verse in the whole Bible starting at Gen **1 v 1**.

The number **17,694 = 18 x 983**

The spiritual meaning of **18** is 'Bondage'

The spiritual meaning of **983** is 'Truth Hidden From Teacher of the Law'

The problem appears to have started in the first couple years of the church. In Acts 6 the apostles said **"It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men... We will turn the responsibility over to them and give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."** (v 2 – 4)

The apostles saw themselves as Teachers of the Word of God. Here a subtle but deadly fallacy creeps into church life: if you want insight or wisdom – ask an apostle. This became a 'Bondage' for the church. The church came to believe God only speaks to the apostles. The apostles themselves bought the lie: 'Truth is Hidden from Teacher of the Law'.

Did Jesus ever say the apostles were to be teachers of the Law? Who is our Teacher?

"When He comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin..." (John 16 v 7-11)

"But when He the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth." (John 16 v 13)

A secondary effect of the elevation of the apostles to 'Teacher of the Law' status was the believers became too concerned with law keeping. Without the Spirit to personally guide each one – their only resort was to assemble a set of laws or rules to live by.

If Paul hadn't been filled with the Holy Ghost – as Ananias declared when he laid hands on him – it is likely the church in Jerusalem would have become another minor religious sect in history – like the remnant Samaritans. Instead, God used Paul to spread the faith through the known world and assisted new believers to cultivate a personal relationship to God through the Spirit.

PART THREE

Isaiah **2 v 8** is the **39th** verse of The Prophets starting at Isaiah **1 v 1**.

The spiritual meaning of **39** is 'Adultery' or 'Disease'

Idolatry is a serious sin – God hates it – He calls it adultery. Instead of each believer turning to God in their heart – they turn to a temple with a holy teacher in it. The apostles replaced God – they became the lords of the church – her masters and her sustainers.

The people instead of loving God – just became devotees of the apostles: Teachers of the Law.

By elevating these apostles above the church and forcing the people of God to pilgrimage to Jerusalem for teaching, the apostles made the Spirit of no importance.

APPLICATION

Dear believers.

You have the Scriptures in your own language. You can read. You are all set.

Meditate on the Scriptures day and night. Make them your bread and your meat.

The Spirit will enlighten these words to your heart – he delights to do this.

If you are just starting – read and pray through the gospels first. Find a small group to study the Scriptures together.

If you find a difficult passage – ask the Spirit. Give him time – the answer will come.

The goal is not to make you into an expert Teacher of the Law – the goal is to be Spirit led.