

40 AD – HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDS ON HOUSE OF CORNELIUS

“And the mean man bows down, and the great man humbles himself: therefore forgive them not.” (Isaiah 2 v 9)

PETER IN JOPPA

In his travels **Peter** was called to Joppa by the disciples because of the death of **Dorcas**. After she was raised back to life he stayed in **Joppa**. This town is the same town that **Jonah** had departed from by ship to escape the command of the LORD to go to **Nineveh** (Jonah 1:3).

PETER IN CAESAREA

After staying in **Joppa** ‘for some time’ (Acts 9:43) we read (Acts 10:9) **Peter** had a vision on the roof of the house he was staying at. Chronologically we place the event in **40 AD**, the year after the visit of the recent convert **Paul** to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30) (see our paper [39 AD](#)).

Peter had a vision of a sheet of unclean animals and was told ‘**get up Peter. Kill and eat.**’ He objected ‘**Surely not LORD! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean**’. The voice from Heaven said ‘**Do not call anything impure that God has made clean**’.

Cornelius the centurion also had a vision to send for Peter. He sent a party of three to Joppa to fetch Peter. Peter took with him six other men and the two parties reached Caesarea.

When he arrived Cornelius fell at his feet in reverence. Peter said ‘**Stand up. I am only a man myself.**’ Peter went inside. He said ‘**You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him.**’

Here is a first class revelation: Peter was following the traditions of Rabbinic law. There is no admonition in the Law of Moses not to associate with Gentiles or enter their house. However, this is a teaching of the Rabbis.¹ This means Peter had also departed from the teachings of Jesus because the LORD condemned the Pharisees – i.e. the entire Rabbinic movement: ‘**Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees...**’ (Matt.16:6)

¹ Rabbinic law proscribes Jewish social contact with Gentiles, particularly accepting hospitality in their homes (m. `Aboda Zara 5:5; m. Toharot 7:6; compare m. Demai 3:4). In the end, in Jewish eyes, Gentiles themselves became a source of ritual impurity (t. Demai 3:14; t. `Aboda Zara 4:11).

It seems Peter had reverted to his old way of thinking. Peter wanted a way of salvation without Christ's death: '**Never LORD! This shall never happen to you!**' (Matt. 16:22) The LORD condemned it: '**Out of my sight, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men.**' (Matt.16:23)

This exposes the fallacy of the Rabbinic logic. They believed if they could construct a rigorous ring fence of man-made rules they could avoid breaking any of the Mosaic Law, and therefore obtain a freedom from sin without the death of Christ.

Imagine Peter's shock when the LORD poured out the Holy Spirit on the audience of Gentiles! They were baptised in water as well and confessed Jesus Christ (Acts 10 v 44-48). The message was unmistakable – God accepted believing Gentiles for salvation – and they were not even followers of the Law of Moses. If that be so, then the teachings of the Rabbis were useless for salvation. Salvation was not merited or deserved – it was the gift of God.

Peter explained this in Jerusalem: '**So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think I could oppose God**' (Acts 12:17)

Was this the same centurion who was present at the Cross and declared: '**Surely this was the Son of God**' (Mark 15:39)? Was this the centurion who beseeched Jesus that his servant was sick? Who said '**Lord, I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.**' (Matt. 8:8) Or was it the same centurion? What else could explain the intense fear of God on Cornelius? If he was guilty of participating in the crucifixion of the LORD then he would have had a great guilt and fear of punishment.

PROPHECY OF ISAIAH 2 V 9

"And the mean man bows down, and the great man humbles himself: therefore forgive them not." (Isaiah 2 v 9)

Peter was exposed as a hypocrite. He preached that Jesus died and rose from the dead. He preached that the prophets testify that all who believe in his name receive forgiveness of sins. But Peter himself wasn't relying on Christ to forgive his own sins – he was relying on his scrupulousness in following the teaching of the Rabbis.

Peter was living a double life. He went into the house of Cornelius and preached salvation in Jesus. But back in Jerusalem he reverted to his rabbinical Jewish ways.

“And the mean man bows down and the great man humbles himself”

Peter’s outward life of following ritual rules of sanctity – e.g. don’t associate with Gentiles or go in their houses – was a false humility. From the outside it looked like bowing down and submission – but from the inside the thoughts of his heart were evil: ‘look at how great I am – so spiritual – following laws meticulously’.

“therefore forgive them not.”

There is no forgiveness of sins other than through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Law keeping can’t save your soul.

Peter was without doubt exposed as a hypocrite. But did Peter learn from his experience in Joppa and Caesarea? The evidence suggests Peter did not. Later, Paul had to sharply rebuke this hypocrisy of Peter (Galatians 2 v 11-21).

Peter eventually moved to Rome – where a legion of Italian believers worshipped the ground he walked on. Peter’s belief that he was a great man attracted him to people who like the centurion also confessed how ‘holy’ he was.

Paul had to write the Book of Romans addressed to these very people to counter the idolatry of Peter and make the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ as plain as he could. Peter wrote he supported the apostleship of Paul but admits his letters are hard to understand (2 Peter 3 v 16).

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'

Peter divided the world into Jews – who could be saved – and Gentiles – who could not be saved. God showed Peter the only division is between the saved and the unsaved – cultural or racial or religious heritage are not essential to being saved.

PART TWO

Isaiah **2 v 9** is the **17,695th** verse in the whole Bible starting at Gen **1 v 1**.

The number **17,695 = 5 x 3539 [495th prime]**

The spiritual meaning of **5** is 'Weakness' or 'Life'

The spiritual meaning of **495** is 'Awake to See God's Face'

The spiritual number **3539** means 'Prophets Teach Christ Must Suffer'

If anyone wishes to 'Awake to See God's Face' – to attain the resurrection from the dead to everlasting life – they must testify that 'Prophets Teach Christ Must Suffer'.

PART THREE

Isaiah **2 v 9** is the **40th** verse of The Prophets starting at Isaiah **1 v 1**.

The spiritual meaning of **40** is 'Severe Test'

In order for the event in the house of Cornelius to happen he had to be obedient to the vision and Peter had to be obedient to his vision.

It was an especially severe test for Peter – whose conscience (falsely informed by Rabbinical teachers) told him not to go into the house of a Gentile – but whose spirit told him (truly informed by the Holy Spirit) that is precisely where he must be.

APPLICATION

Cornelius feared God. As a soldier – even if he was not the same centurion who crucified Christ – he had inflicted wounds and perhaps even caused deaths of other soldiers or individuals. He knew he had done crimes deserving of the severe punishment of God.

God will punish sin. Judgment is coming on this world – the time is merely being held back by God to permit God fearing people like Cornelius to be saved. It is good and pure to fear God!

As Christians, we must not begin to think of non-religious people as unclean. We must not divide the world into ‘safe’ religious people and ‘unclean’ non-religious people.

There are non-religious people, like Cornelius, who live under a burden of unconfessed sin. They fear God. They know punishment is coming. They don’t know how to be saved.

There are religious people, like Peter, who have come to trust in their religious lifestyle to keep them ‘right’ and ‘safe’ in God’s eyes. The truth is, by following Man’s Religion Peter had departed from the teaching of Jesus: he was sinning as horribly as any unwashed Gentile!

Christians: depart from religion. Believe in the gospel of salvation by Jesus’ blood. Follow the teachings of Jesus – in spirit and truth – without adding one single rule invented by man – and especially avoiding the idolatry of elevating Teachers of the Law, like Peter, in the church.

Unsaved people: believe in the gospel of salvation by Jesus’ blood. Don’t adopt any religion. Be like the centurion – worship the LORD in your own home.