

# Peter and His Vision

In order to properly understand all the ramifications that are going on in Peter's Vision, as well as some of the Biblical scenario which makes up the cultural and historic background for Peter's Vision; we will need to review some pertinent scriptures. This will also help set the stage for what is going on with Peter and his vision.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:41-43 (NASB)

- (41) "Also concerning the **foreigner** who is not of Thy people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Thy name's sake  
(42) (for they will hear of Thy great name and Thy mighty hand, and of Thine outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house,  
(43) hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and do according to all for which the **foreigner** calls to Thee, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as do Thy people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Thy name.

## Psalm 67 (NIV)

- (1) May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make His face shine upon us,  
(2) that your ways may be known on earth,  
your salvation among **all** nations (Gentiles).  
(3) May the peoples praise you, O God;  
may **all** the peoples praise you.  
(4) May the nations (Gentiles) be glad and sing for joy,  
for you rule the peoples justly  
and guide the nations (Gentiles) of the earth.  
(5) May the peoples praise you, O God;  
may **all** the peoples praise you.  
(6) Then the land will yield its harvest,  
and God, our God, will bless us.  
(7) God will bless us,  
and **all** the ends of the earth will fear Him.

Even so, over the following centuries there had been the tendency to add restriction on the interaction of those of Israelite ancestry and those of non-Israelite ancestry; in order to stop bringing pagan practices into Jewish culture and worship. If the person was a practicing pagan idolater, this may well have been a proper attitude. However not so when a non-Israelite Gentile was seeking to become, or already was, a righteous God-fearing person! Yet, it seems that these

new man-made laws, more often than not, did not take these two different circumstances into consideration. Many individuals had difficulty understanding where the Laws of God stopped and the Laws of Man started. It appears that Peter, just as many others, may have been such a person, who mistakenly perceived all Gentiles as being unclean. He may have understood that if a Gentile had become a proselyte and been circumcised that he had then been grafted into Judaism and was no longer to be considered to be a Gentile; because he was now a full and complete Jewish proselyte. Where many seemed to have a problem was when a person of Gentile ancestry was seeking to serve God but had not yet reached the point of wanting to be circumcised. Sadly, it appears that Peter still considered such a person to be an unclean pagan. It appears that this is why Peter needed for God to show him, his mistake and what he was inadvertently doing.

**Acts 10:11-23, 28** (Amplified)

- (11) And he saw the sky opened and something like a great sheet lowered by the four corners, descending to earth.
- (12) It contained all kinds of quadrupeds *and wild beasts* and creeping things of the earth and birds of the air.
- (13) And there came a voice to him saying; Rise up, Peter, kill and eat.
- (14) But Peter said. No, by no means, LORD; for I have never eaten anything that is common *and* unhallowed or [ceremonially] unclean.
- (15) And the voice came to him again a second time; What God has cleansed *and* pronounced clean, do not you defile *and* profane by regarding *and* calling common *and* unhallowed or unclean.
- (16) This occurred three times; then immediately the sheet was taken up to heaven.
- (17) Now Peter was still inwardly perplexed *and* doubted as to what the vision which he had seen could mean, when [just then] behold the messengers that were sent by Cornelius, who had made inquiry for Simon's house, stopped *and* stood before the gate.
- (18) And they called out to inquire whether Simon who was surnamed Peter was staying there.
- (19) And while Peter was earnestly revolving the vision in his mind and meditating on it, the (Holy) Spirit said to him, behold, three men are looking for you!
- (20) Get up and go below and accompany them without any doubt [about its legality] or any discrimination or hesitation, for I have sent them.
- (21) Then Peter went down to the men and said, I am the man you seek; what is the purpose of your coming?
- (22) And they said, Cornelius, a centurion (captain) who is just *and* upright and in right standing with God, being God-Fearing *and* **obedient**, and well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, has been instructed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house; and he has received in answer [to prayer] a warning to listen to *and* act up what you have to say.

(23) So Peter invited them in to be his guests [for the night]. The next day he arose and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

(28) And he said to them, You yourselves are aware how it is not lawful or permissible for a Jew to keep company with *or* to visit *or* [even] to come near *or* to speak first to any one of another nationality, but God has shown and taught me by words that **I should not call any human being common or unhallowed or (ceremonially) unclean.**

(29) Therefore when I was sent for, I came without hesitation *or* objection *or* misgivings. So now I ask for what reason you sent for me?

Peter knew and understood that his Vision was **not** about what he or anyone else should or should not eat! But rather it was about how he was to view others!

Isn't it amazing how any subject, when **not** taken out of context, will nearly always agree with the entire Word of God, even when things are lost in the translation, as was the case in several of the previous verses. How many times have Bible Teachers interpreted verses 11 through 15 to mean that God said it was now **OK** to eat unclean food? Millions of people have taken those verses out of context and decided from them that God made **all** animals clean, even those that He had previously said consistently that some animals were unclean to eat. We find no record in the Bible where God laid out a prophecy saying that certain animals were only labeled unclean for a particular period of time in history, and then they would suddenly become clean. You cannot find that anywhere! Logically it does not make sense that God would need to "**withhold**" animals that were "**created**" for food, from some generations and then decide He had made a mistake. And those things He had called unclean for 4,000 years, were really **KOSHER** and **OK** for food, after all - Ooop's. No! God did not make a mistake! Neither did He change what was and was not clean for a person to eat!

An interesting point that has not usually been taught about verse 12 is that it was apparently **not ONLY** un-clean animals that were lowered in the "**sheet**" but that **ALL** manner of animals were in the vision. If there were a mixture of clean and un-clean animals and birds that Peter was told to choose from when he was told by God to kill and eat, the whole context makes more sense. Peter's refusal, saying that he had never eaten anything common or "**ceremonially**" un-clean, makes perfect sense, since "**traditionally**" even the clean animals would have been considered "**ceremonially un-clean**" if they were mixed with un-clean animals. This would mean that they would have had to have been separated for a specified period of time, before they would be used as food. Another interesting note, the word used in this verse which in most translation is translated as "**kill**" in verse 13, is the same word used for "**sacrifice**" as in the case of the Passover Lamb, etc. This makes even more sense if Peter could not understand why God wanted him to "**sacrifice**" something as well as eat it, if it were **not** "**ceremonially**" clean by "**legal**" standards. It is also very unlikely that God would have insisted that Peter kill and offer any type of sacrifice from a truly un-clean species of animal!

In the following verses all of these things and the intent of the vision are made perfectly clear, when God tells Peter specifically what the vision meant. Since Peter was **NOT** sent to a Gentile home of a *non*-believer, but rather to the home of what was a truly righteous and God fearing man. Who was **OBEDIENT** to the Laws of God, and he was held in high esteem by the entire Jewish Community of the city in which he lived, God no longer considered Cornelius to be a **Pagan** Gentile. It was obvious, by his life's journey, that he was moving toward becoming a convert to observant Judaism. God made it clear to Peter that he was not to consider this man "**un-clean**" that God had justified (cleansed) him, even though Cornelius was not genetically Jewish, and still living among those who were "**un-clean**", Pagan Idolaters. In Peter's own words, God had shown him that **no** human being (who was seeking God with all their heart) should **ever** be considered "**un-clean**". Again this was not a new concept. God had made it clear throughout His Word, especially in Isaiah, that **ANY** Gentile seeking God was to be adopted into the family of Judaism and given the same rights as one who was born into it. The prevailing Rabbinic "**tradition**" of the times, however, still held that a righteous Jew could not initiate any association with a non-Jews, until they had **totally** completed conversion and were known to have been circumcised (if they were male)!

For the sake of pure argument... or debate... let's make this a hypothetical episode, viewed from another perspective. **IF** there were only un-clean animals in this vision, and that these multitudes of venerable scholars were right in believing God told Peter to kill and eat an un-clean animal species, would that make it mandatory to and for **ALL** believers? **IF** we are familiar with all "**God-breathed Scripture**", we know that God occasionally makes exceptions, and tells one of His Prophets, Kings or Righteous Ones to do something to prove their faith to Him, as He did in the case of Abraham being told to sacrifice Isaac. If all believers thought that Abraham's example was the way to prove their faith in God, then because He told Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice, we would have perfect basis for espousing a scriptural basis for "**human**" sacrifice. **IF** the Bible Teachers still want to believe that what God said to Peter was meant for everyone, then it stands to reason that we should also consider the "**special**" instructions given to John the Baptist, to make locust and wild honey our total diet. Or better yet, they might say that we needed to take heed of, and put to practice in our lives, the same practices that God directed Isaiah to do, in Isaiah chapter 20.

**Isaiah 20:2-3** (NASB)

(2) at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips, and take your shoes off your feet." And he did so, going naked and barefoot.

(3) And the LORD said, "Even as My servant Isaiah has gone **naked** and **barefoot** three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush,..."

Many times we find God requiring something “different” from certain individuals that could not and should not, be applied to everyone! If many of these things were incorporated into the 613 Laws, Commandments, and Ordinances that we **ARE** to observe... the people of God would be even more “peculiar” than God intended them to be! If modern armies marched around cities blowing a horn to capture them, or continued to go out to meet attacking armies, singing hymns and carrying musical instruments instead of weapons, (unless God had given them those special instructions, directly, for that specific case and time) most of the People of God would have been wiped out completely! Another less radical example might be to ask how appropriate would it be for us to follow God’s direction to Ezekiel in Chapter 4?

**Ezekiel 4:12** (NASB)

(12) “And you shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked it in their sight over human dung.”

If we consider the problems most Christians have with the dietary Laws of God (particularly in the U.S.), we find that it is the ever present desire for bacon, ham chops, pork ribs and pork roasts; plus, catfish, shrimp, lobster, crab, etc. Yet, when we look at all scriptures dealings specifically with the pig, or swine, we find that this animal was designed for a specific purpose, which was not for human FOOD. As with most other animals that are determined to be unclean by scripture, that label is **only** applied to their being used as human food; and not as pets (dogs, cats and the like), or work animals (donkeys, horses, camels and the like). Yet in Leviticus 11:8 we see God pointing out some of the unclean animals, and of these He even specifies that you are definitely **NOT** to use for food, **or even to touch the carcass of... the PIG, the Rabbit, Rock Badger and others!!!**

What happens when someone who recognized that God really does give restriction on the diet of those who want to be grafted in to the Religion preached and taught by Jesus?

**Matthew 7:6** (NASB)

(6) “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

Since we are what we eat! What is Jesus possible saying? Perhaps this is why some people try to trample into the ground even the very thought that they might need to refrain from such foods? Then many of these same people seem to turn and attack those who say it is wrong to eat the flesh of Pigs and other Un-clean things! Is this, or is this not, how many Christians seem to react when they are told that they should not be eating Bacon, Ham, Pork Chops, Baby Back Ribs and the like?

**Isaiah 65:1-3, 4-7 (NASB)**

- (1) **“I PERMITTED** Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;  
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said,  
‘Here am I, here am I,’ To a nation which did not call on My NAME.”
- (2) “I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,  
Who walk in the way which is not good,  
following their own thoughts,
- (3) A people who continually provoke Me to My FACE,...
- (4) ...**Who eat swine’s flesh, and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots.”**
- (5) “Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me,  
**For I am holier than you!’**  
THESE ARE SMOKE IN MY NOSTRILS, A FIRE THAT BURNS ALL THE DAY.”
- (6) **“Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but I will repay;  
I will even repay into their bosom,**
- (7) **Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together,”**  
Says the LORD...!