

## 11. Peter on the Great Controversy (1Q 2016—Rebellion and Redemption)

**Biblical material:** 1 Pet. 2:9, 10; Deut.14:2; 1 Pet. 4:1–7; 2 Pet. 1:16–21; 2 Pet. 3:3–14; Dan. 2:34, 35.

### Quotes

- Conformity is not an admirable trait. Conformity is a copout. It threatens self-awareness. It can lead groups to enforce rigid and arbitrary rules. *Alexandra Robbins*
- When people get immersed in a culture with strong new memes, it tends to be a sink-or-swim proposition. Either you change your mind, succumbing to peer pressure and adopting the new memes as your own, or you struggle with the extremely uncomfortable feeling of being surrounded by people who think you're crazy or inadequate. The fact that you probably think the same about them is little consolation. *Richard Brodie*
- Peer pressure and social norms are powerful influences on behavior, and they are classic excuses. *Andrew Lansley*
- Ideas that require people to reorganize their picture of the world provoke hostility. *James Gleick*
- You can't change the fruit without changing the root. *Stephen R. Covey*

### Questions

How did Peter react to the vision of the sheet full of unclean animals in Acts 10:9–14? What does this tell us? How do the issues of the Great Controversy play out in Peter's life? Think of some examples... When Peter gave in to criticism about associating with Gentiles, what did this say? How did Peter vindicate God and his character?

### Bible summary

Peter has come a long way in his recognition of the new community of believers as “a specially-chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” (1 Peter 2:9 FBV, referencing Deut.14:2). Thinking of the issues in the Great Controversy, Peter gives clear advice on how Christians are to live (1 Pet. 4:1–7). At the heart of this is his conviction regarding the revelation of God in Jesus (2 Pet. 1:16–21). The Great Controversy will come to an end, says Peter, showing us how it will be resolved, confronting doubters (2 Pet. 3:3–14, see also Dan. 2:34–35).

### Comment

Peter, like Paul, had to make major changes in his ideas about God and religious practice. In his vision of the sheet with unclean beasts Peter had to learn the lesson that God does not have favorites, and that he wants all to come to him for healing salvation. In his mission to represent Christ, Peter needed to ask himself some questions: How does the "specialness" of Israel as God's people now play out in the new mission to the Gentiles? How do national backgrounds affect the way we understand the fundamental issues in life and religion? How do we best represent God to the *whole* world? Peter's conclusion after seeing the vision of the animals on the sheet is that “in every nation God accepts those who respect him, and do what is right. You know the message he sent to

Israel, sharing the good news of peace that comes from Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.” Acts 10:34, 35 FBV.

Peter experienced paradigm shifts in his understanding of God, of his society, of himself. He had to be changed from what he was into to what God wanted him to become. His role as spokesman for the disciples reveals his extrovert character, but his self-reliance ebbs away all too rapidly and he ends up denying Jesus. Even after his amazing speech at Pentecost he had many lessons to learn about what God really wanted. He had to change his whole outlook on mission, on Israel as a special people, on his role as a witness for God before the world.

Applying such concepts to ourselves, we should admit that we all have discriminatory tendencies, and we reflect the ideas of our own societies. Yet the Bible tells us that there is no Jew nor Greek. In the context of the great controversy we see that racial hatred is just another of the Deceivers lies, another way to sow tares among the wheat are create conflict and chaos. Our role is to demonstrate these fundamental truths that rise above such distractions, and reveal the God who is the creator of all, and father of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Only as the truth of God prevails can we have true unity and harmony, only by this God-given love for each other will all people know we really are God’s disciples.

### **Ellen White Comments**

It is Satan’s constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law and gives men license to sin. At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God so that they regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion and expressed in modes of worship. Thus the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God. By perverted conceptions of the divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of Deity; and horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry. {GC 569}

Satan’s efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love; his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements; and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers. {GC x.-xi}

Peter was naturally forward and impulsive, and Satan had taken advantage of these characteristics to overthrow him. Just before the fall of Peter, Jesus had said to him, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Luke 22:31, 32. That time had now come, and the transformation in Peter was evident. The close, testing questions of the Lord had not called out one forward, self-sufficient reply; and because of his humiliation and repentance, Peter was better prepared than ever before to act as shepherd to the flock. {DA 812}