

Agents of Hope: God's Great Missionaries
From Folly to Faith: The Apostle Peter

Lesson #8 for August 23, 2008

Scriptures: Acts 2:14-40; Acts 3; 5:1-11; 1-2 Peter.

1. This lesson discusses the transformation which took place in the impulsive, but enthusiastic, Peter that changed him from a passionate, but uneducated, fishermen into a great champion for the gospel—a man who spoke eloquently before the Sanhedrin.
2. What do you think of first when you think of Peter? Do you think of the bold, impulsive disciple who always seemed to be the first one to speak? Do you think of the disciple who said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”? (Matthew 16:16, *GNB*) Many of the world's Christians believe Peter was the first pope. In what ways would you contrast Peter with his brother, Andrew, or perhaps John or James?
3. Where was Peter and what was he doing when he was first mentioned in Scripture? Peter was one of the first disciples. (John 1:40-42; See #7 below) Even though he was not the first to commit to following Jesus, Peter's name is listed first in each place where the disciples are listed by name. (Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3.13-19; Luke 12-16) Why do you think that is?
4. Does Peter strike you as a somewhat emotional and passionate person? Understood and employed correctly, emotions are a wonderful thing that can motivate us to do what is right.
5. What do we know about Peter's early training and employment? Peter and his family including Andrew originally came from Bethsaida. Bethsaida means “house of fishing.” Jesus performed a number of miracles there. It was located at the very northernmost portion of the Sea of Galilee. It was not discovered archaeologically until 1987.
6. Peter was married, and his mother-in-law lived with the family. (Matthew 8:14) The home of Peter apparently became the temporary home of Jesus in Galilee after He had been rejected in Nazareth. If Peter was the first pope, why don't current popes follow Peter's example in marriage?
7. Peter, Andrew, James, and John had been with Jesus off and on for some time—apparently about 1.5 years (see “A Harmony of the Gospels,” *5SDABC* 196-201)—from the time of His baptism through the following year while He ministered in Judea. {*Signs of the Times*, January 8, 1885, par. 3} When John the Baptist was arrested and imprisoned, Jesus chose to move His operations from Judea to Galilee—away from the “heat” and vigorous conflict.
8. Soon after arriving in Galilee to take up His Galilean Ministry, He began calling disciples. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were apparently the first to be called—and Peter was not the first of those. (Matthew 4:18-20) If Jesus was the cousin of James and John, (see Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1) and if Peter and Andrew had been working with James, John, and their father for some time as fishermen, the call of those four disciples was by no means a surprise. They had known Jesus for some time. They had a basis for trusting Him. They had been following Him at times in Judea for more than a year.
9. As a married person, how would you respond if Jesus came by your desk or your place of employment and said, “Leave everything and follow Me”? What kind of assurance did Jesus give to Peter, John, James, and Andrew that He would be able to take care of them? (Luke 5:1-

11)

10. Events after Jesus ascended to heaven are recorded in the book of Acts. Acts is primarily about the work of Peter and then of Paul. Together with John, Paul and Peter are the best-known of the apostles. Contrast Paul with John and Peter. Paul was a Roman citizen who grew up in Tarsus (now in Turkey, near the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea), had the equivalent of a university education, was a “Pharisee of the Pharisees,” and was wealthy and powerful. But, when called, Paul also left everything and followed Jesus. Would Jesus ever expect that of us today? How would we respond? After ministering in Galilee for about a year, Jesus fed the 5000, walked on the water, then preached the sermon recorded in John 6.
11. Subsequently, Jesus took His disciples away from Judea and Galilee (in Samaria and Perea) for a period of about six months to begin preparing them very specifically for the time when He would be gone. Near the end of that six months of preparation, Jesus took the disciples far north into the area of Caesarea Philippi. It was there that Jesus asked the now-famous question, “Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15, *GNB*) In his usual fervent response, Peter said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16, *GNB*)
12. What did Jesus mean when He suggested that “this truth” had been revealed to Peter by His Father? Is it possible that Jesus had almost given up on anyone “getting the message”?
13. Think of the different ways in which Peter tried to be a leader among the disciples. He asked permission from Jesus to walk to Him on the water. (Matthew 14:22-32) He fervently promised that even if the other disciples all abandoned Jesus, he was prepared to die for Him. (Matt 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38)
14. Peter, along with James and John, was taken into the inner portion of the Garden of Gethsemane to be with Jesus and to support Him with prayer. Instead, they all slept. (Matthew 26:36-46) At the time of the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter attempted to cut off the head of Malchus but only managed to cut off an ear! (John 18:10,26) After following Jesus to the home of Annas—where Jesus was initially tried—and being helped to get into the courtyard by John, (*DA 711*) Peter denied his Lord three times before the cock crowed a second time. (Mark 14:66-72)
15. What happened to Peter and the other disciples that made such an incredible change in them? (Acts 4:8-13) Was it that they realized that their Friend, Jesus, was not only Messiah but God?
16. Why do you think the “conversion” of the disciples took so long? How could the disciples have been with Jesus so long, seen God in human form, heard all His teaching, seen all those miracles, and still not be “changed” until after the death and resurrection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit “coming upon” them at Pentecost? Why was it that their lives were not really transformed until after the resurrection? Did they need to rearrange their “picture” of God? Did they need a paradigm shift? Does one need to recognize that there is significant data that does not fit into his paradigm or “worldview” before one sees a need to change his paradigm? Why couldn’t Jesus, who was the most effective Teacher of all time, convince 12 men that He lived with for over one year, the truth about His future trial and crucifixion. He could not even convince them about His true identity and mission! Why couldn’t He clarify in their minds the truth about the role of the Messiah? Was the paradigm shift required of the disciples “bigger” and more difficult than that required of us? Do we have the right picture of God now?
17. Peter became one of the “pillars” of the church in Jerusalem. When things became very difficult in Jerusalem, he began to travel to other places.

18. Peter traveled down to the coast of Judea. After healing Aeneas, he was called to Joppa where he raised Dorcas from the dead. (Acts 9:32-43) That put Peter in a very exclusive group of “prophets” mentioned in Scripture who raised people from the dead: Elijah, Elisha, (Elisha's bones-2 Kings 13:21), Jesus, Peter, and Paul. Did other disciples raise people from the dead? (See Matthew 10:8) What can we learn from the story of the man being raised to life by just touching the bones of Elisha?
19. From Joppa, Peter was called to Caesarea where he had that “eye-opening” experience—another very large paradigm shift—with Cornelius, the centurion. Peter needed a lot of convincing to change his views about Gentiles. He took with him six witnesses before he dared to enter the house of a Gentile and eat with him. But after the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, Peter finally recognized that God was reaching out to them as well. (Acts 10) If it were not for Peter’s experience with Cornelius and Peter’s subsequent leadership role in the church, would the early Christian church have accepted the work of Paul for the Gentiles?
20. When Peter got back to Jerusalem, he was, of course, “called on the carpet” for associating with Gentiles. But Peter was ready and he had his witnesses. Fortunately, through the witness and influence of the Holy Spirit, the church at that time accepted the idea that the gospel could be presented to Gentiles.
21. After James (John’s brother) had been beheaded, Peter was arrested at the time of Passover, and Herod intended to kill him as well. But Peter was miraculously released from prison by an angel. After speaking with the believers in Jerusalem, he left Jerusalem to go elsewhere to preserve his own life.
22. Many years later, Peter determined to preserve his recollection of the life of Jesus by writing his version of the story of the life of Jesus. With the help of John Mark, he did just that. We read the results in the Gospel of Mark. (2 Peter 1:12-15; 1 Peter 5:13)
23. Tradition suggests that Peter was imprisoned in the Mammertine prison in Rome, maybe at the same time Paul was there about A.D. 67. When crucified, Peter specifically requested to be crucified upside down because he considered it too great a privilege to be crucified in the same way as his Master had been.
24. In his two short epistles, Peter wrote in very polished Greek—no doubt because he had the help of Silas or some other native Greek speaker/writer—encouraging church members everywhere to live faithful and upright lives. He discussed the process of sanctification. (1 Peter 1:18-21) He wrote about angels and about some of the issues in the great controversy. He seems to have quoted from the book of Enoch, an apocryphal book written about 200 years earlier. (Compare Jude)
25. Peter ended his two short epistles with a rousing appeal that we prepare ourselves for the second coming. He made it very clear that he believed that the delay—“delay” even at his time—in the second coming is because God is waiting for us to get ready. (2 Peter 3:10-12) What are we doing to hasten the second coming of our Lord?

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