

## ***Feed My Sheep: 1 & 2 Peter***

### ***The Person of Peter***

Lesson #1 for April 1, 2017

Scriptures: Luke 5:1-11; 22:31-34,54-62; Matthew 14:22-23; 16:13-17; Galatians 2:9,11-14.

1. Before we jump into studying the books of 1&2 Peter, we will take this lesson to discuss what we know about Peter himself. We know a lot about Peter because he was very ambitious and forward and repeatedly spoke up—often on behalf of all of the disciples. After denying Jesus at His trial, he was one of the first ones to race to see the empty tomb. Peter was one of the three disciples—along with James and John—often named as the closest associates of Jesus. There are many references to Peter in the Gospels as well as in the book of Acts. One of his shortcomings is detailed in Galatians 2.
2. It is clear from the story of Peter that he was quick to make mistakes; but, fortunately, he was quick to ask for forgiveness and move forward in faith and humility.
3. When do we first meet Peter in the Gospels? Chronologically, the first mention of Peter in the Gospels is found in John 1:35-2:12. It was near the Jordan River where John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing. After Jesus returned from being tempted in the wilderness, Jesus went once again to where John was baptizing. Peter was called by his brother Andrew with great excitement because Andrew felt that they had found the Messiah.

On the following day, while two disciples were standing near, John [the Baptist] again saw Jesus among the people. Again the face of the prophet was lighted up with glory from the Unseen, as he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The words thrilled the hearts of the [John's] disciples. They did not fully understand them. What meant the name that John had given Him,—“the Lamb of God”? John himself had not explained it.

Leaving John, they went to seek Jesus. One of the two was Andrew, the brother of Simon; the other was John the evangelist. These were Christ's first disciples. Moved by an irresistible impulse, they followed Jesus,—anxious to speak with Him, yet awed and silent, lost in the overwhelming significance of the thought, "Is this the Messiah?"—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*\* 138.4-5.

Andrew sought to impart the joy that filled his heart. Going in search of his brother Simon [Peter], he cried, "We have found the Messias."—*Ibid.*\* 139.5. [Content in brackets is added.]

4. Try to imagine how you would feel if someone told you that the One for whom the entire Jewish nation had been waiting for 400 years had just appeared. One of Peter's closest associates in the Gospels and later in the book of Acts was a young man named John. What do we know about John?

John was the son of Zebedee, probably the younger son, for except in Luke-Acts he is mentioned after his brother James. Luke gives the order Peter, John and James, probably because in the early days of the church John was closely associated with Peter (Lk. 8:51; 9:28; Acts 1:13). That John's mother's name was Salome is an inference from Mk. 16:1 and Mt. 27:56; for the third woman who is said to have accompanied the two Marys to the tomb is designated Salome by Mark, and "the mother of Zebedee's children" by Matthew. Salome is usually regarded as the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, because in Jn. 19:25 four women are said to have stood near the cross, the two Marys mentioned in Mark and Matthew, the mother of Jesus, and his mother's sister. **If this identification is correct, John was a cousin of Jesus on his mother's side.**—Tasker, R. V. G. (1996). John, the Apostle. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H.

Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible Dictionary\** (3rd ed., p. 592). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [Bold type is added.]

If John the Baptist was indeed a cousin of Jesus on His mother's side and if James and John the sons of Zebedee were also cousins of Jesus on their mother's side, does that mean that they were also cousins of John the Baptist? Also, consider the following about John written by Ellen White.

He [Jesus] had been separated from his mother for quite a length of time. During this period he had been baptized by John and had endured the temptations in the wilderness. Rumors had reached Mary concerning her son and his sufferings. **John, one of the new disciples, had searched for Christ and had found him in his humiliation, emaciated, and bearing the marks of great physical and mental distress. Jesus, unwilling that John should witness his humiliation, had gently yet firmly dismissed him from his presence. He wished to be alone; no human eye must behold his agony, no human heart be called out in sympathy with his distress.**

The disciple [John] had sought Mary in her home and related to her the incidents of this meeting with Jesus, as well as the event of his baptism, when the voice of God was heard in acknowledgment of his Son, and the prophet John had pointed to Christ, saying, "Behold the [100] Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."—Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy,\** vol. 2, 99.2-3; *5SDABC\** 1132.3; *3Red\** 3.3. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

What would a Jew in the days of Jesus think when someone said, "Behold the Lamb of God...?"

5. Evidence suggests that the baptism of Jesus occurred at least 1½ years before the calling of the disciples by the Sea of Galilee as recorded in Luke 5:1-11. During that time, Jesus had traveled back to Galilee and visited the wedding feast, turning many gallons of water into pure grape juice. (John 2:1-11) He moved His main center of operations to Capernaum. (John 2:12) Later, He returned to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration, cleansed the temple the first time, (John 2:13-25) and had that discussion with Nicodemus. (John 3:1-21) That was followed by a full year of ministry in Judea, sometimes with some of the early disciples, and sometimes alone. Then, there was the second Passover visit. (John 5) During one trip through Samaria, He spoke with the woman at the well of Sychar. (John 4:1-42) Later, He healed the nobleman's son. (John 4:43-54) About the time of that second Passover visit when Jesus was rejected and threatened by the Sanhedrin, (John 5:16-47) John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Agrippa. (Matthew 14:3-5; Luke 3:19-20) Then, Jesus's full-time ministry in Judea was finished; He moved His area of ministry to Galilee.
6. Most of the three synoptic Gospels are focused on what Jesus did in Galilee during the next year. Read Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16; and Luke 5:1-11. Try to imagine yourself in that story. They were a group of professional fisherman who had spent their lives on the Sea of Galilee. They were very discouraged because they had recently heard of the imprisonment of John the Baptist. (Matthew 14:3-5; John 3:19-20) They had spent the entire night fishing and had caught nothing. Do you think God intentionally prevented the disciples from catching anything that night? We do not know how much time Peter and the other early disciples had spent with Jesus during His 1½ years when Jesus was primarily working in Judea. But, how do you suppose those future disciples felt about having a Carpenter tell them as professional fisherman when and how to fish?

The discourse ended, Jesus turned to Peter, and bade him launch out into the sea, and let down his net for a draught. **But Peter was disheartened. All night he had taken nothing. During the lonely hours he had thought of the fate**

**of John the Baptist, who was languishing alone in his dungeon. He had thought of the prospect before Jesus and His followers, of the ill success of the mission to Judea, and the malice of the priests and rabbis. Even his own occupation had failed him; and as he watched by the empty nets, the future had seemed dark with discouragement.** “Master,” he said, “we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.”—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*\* 245.3. [Bold type is added.]

7. Try to imagine yourself in the shoes of Peter at that point. Were Peter and his friends about to give up following Jesus and return to fishing? Did this miracle help to encourage them that it would be safe to become followers of Jesus? Did they have even the remotest idea that most of them would end up being martyrs?
8. Of course, we do not know what Jesus talked about that day while He was sitting in Peter's boat. Do you suppose that some of what He said convinced Peter and his friends to leave their nets and their boats and follow Jesus?
9. Try to imagine Jesus coming to your place of employment and telling you to drop everything and follow Him. Peter was already married. How was he going to support his wife and children and mother-in-law and perhaps other relatives? In our day, would Jesus ask us to make a total commitment as the disciples did?
10. A short time after this story, Jesus called all twelve of His future disciples. (Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16) Most of the events recorded in the early chapters of Matthew, Mark, and Luke occurred during the next year as Jesus ministered in Galilee. By the end of that year, people were flocking to see Jesus from all the countries around as well as from Galilee.
11. Read about the events that occurred about one year later as recorded in Matthew 14:13-33; Mark 6:30-52; and John 6:1-21. Try to imagine the amazement of the disciples and the 5000 men plus women and children who sat down that day on the grassy hillside and ate their fill from a small boy's lunch of five small loaves and two fishes.
12. After Jesus had fed about 15,000 people, a movement arose—probably starting with the disciples—to take Jesus by force and make Him King of the Jews. Then, Jesus spoke to the disciples with great authority and told them to get in a boat and leave for Capernaum. Ellen White said that Peter and the other disciples were very disheartened. Jesus then dismissed the crowds and went by Himself up into the hill to pray most of the night. (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46) What do you suppose He prayed about?
13. Read Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; and John 6:15-21. Ellen White suggested that there were other people in that small boat besides the disciples. (DA 382.5) Between 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock in the morning, Jesus walked toward the boat on the water. When the disciples saw Him, they were terrified. They thought it was a ghost. But, when they recognized that it was Jesus, Peter asked if he could walk to Jesus on the water. Peter started out with great enthusiasm, keeping his eyes on Jesus. But, when he turned around in pride and looked at his fellow disciples back in the boat, he began to sink. Only because Jesus reached out to him and saved him was he able to return safely to the boat. Immediately, they were at the destination to which they had tried to row so hard all night.
14. Shortly after the feeding of the 5000, while many of the Jews were traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover, Jesus took His twelve disciples and left the territory of Galilee for the next six months. They traveled to the region of Tyre and Sidon where He healed that Canaanite woman's daughter who had been controlled by a demon. (Matthew 15:29-31; Mark 7:31-37) Later, farther east and north at Caesarea Philippi, surrounded by temples to pagan gods, Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13, GNB) They suggested the names of some people who had been mentioned by the crowds. Then, Jesus asked them point blank, “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered: “You are the Messiah,

the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16, *GNB*) Jesus immediately commended him, suggesting that this truth had been revealed to him directly by the Father in heaven.

15. At that point, Jesus began explaining to His disciples that the time was soon coming when He would go to Jerusalem and be handed over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law, end up being put to death, and three days later coming back to life. Peter immediately tried to rebuke Him. Jesus then turned to Peter and said: “Get away from me, Satan!” (Matthew 16:23, *GNB*) Who was Jesus addressing there?

The disciples still expected Christ to reign as a temporal prince. Although He had so long concealed His design, they believed that He would not always remain in poverty and obscurity; the time was near when He would establish His kingdom. That the hatred of the priests and rabbis would never be overcome, that Christ would be rejected by His own nation, condemned as a deceiver, and crucified as a malefactor,—such a thought the disciples had never entertained.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 415.1.

16. Following Peter’s confession, there were at least three—and maybe four—times when Jesus specifically told the disciples that He would be killed in Jerusalem but that He would arise again the third day. (See Matthew 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27; and Luke 18:31-34.) The disciples could not even fathom such a situation. Hoping as they did that Jesus would become the King of the Jews here on this earth, they could not understand what Jesus was talking about.
17. Read Luke 22:31-34,54-62. Each of the disciples was certain that he would remain faithful to Jesus. Always being the outspoken one, Peter made his beliefs known. But, Jesus proved that He knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. After falling asleep—along with James and John—in the garden instead of praying in support of Jesus, Peter and the other disciples ran away when Judas arrived, leading the crowd of priests and rulers.

After deserting their Master in the garden, two of the disciples had ventured to follow, at a distance, the mob that had Jesus in charge. These disciples were Peter and John. The priests recognized John as a well-known disciple of Jesus, and admitted him to the hall, hoping that as he witnessed the humiliation of his Leader, he would scorn the idea of such a one being the Son of God. John spoke in favor of Peter, and gained an entrance for him also.

The disciple John, upon entering the judgment hall, did not try to conceal the fact that he was a follower of Jesus. He did not mingle with the rough company who were reviling his Master. He was not questioned, for he did not assume a false character, and thus lay himself liable to suspicion. He sought a retired corner secure from the notice [712] of the mob, but as near Jesus as it was possible for him to be. Here he could see and hear all that took place at the trial of his Lord.—*Ibid.*\* 710.3-712.0.

18. Ellen White tells us that if Peter had been faithful in prayer instead of sleeping in Gethsemane, he would not have denied his Lord. (*DA* 714.0)

While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter’s lips, and the shrill [713] crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned from the frowning judges, and looked full upon His poor disciple. At the same time Peter’s eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there.

The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow. Conscience was aroused. Memory was active. Peter called to mind his promise of a few short hours before that he would go with his Lord to prison and to death. He

remembered his grief when the Saviour told him in the upper chamber that he would deny his Lord thrice that same night. Peter had just declared that he knew not Jesus, but he now realized with bitter grief how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself.

A tide of memories rushed over him. The Saviour's tender mercy, His kindness and long-suffering, His gentleness and patience toward His erring disciples,—all was remembered. He recalled the caution, "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Luke 22:31, 32. He reflected with horror upon his own ingratitude, his falsehood, his perjury. Once more he looked at his Master, and saw a sacrilegious hand raised to smite Him in the face. Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, heartbroken, from the hall.

He pressed on in solitude and darkness, he knew not and cared not whither. At last he found himself in Gethsemane. The scene of a few hours before came vividly to his mind. The suffering face of his Lord, stained with bloody sweat and convulsed with anguish, rose before him. He remembered with bitter remorse that Jesus had wept and agonized in prayer alone, while those who should have united with Him in that trying hour were sleeping. He remembered His solemn charge, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41. **He witnessed again the scene in the judgment hall. It was torture to his bleeding heart to know that he had added the heaviest burden to the Saviour's humiliation and grief. On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die.—*Ibid.*\* 712.4-713.3. [Bold type is added.]**

19. What an incredible experience! No wonder Peter was one of the two disciples—along with John—who raced that Sunday morning to see if it was true that the tomb was empty.

During the ministry of Jesus, Peter often acted in the role of leader of the 12 disciples. He was their usual spokesman. When Matthew lists the disciples, he says "first, . . . Peter" (*Matt. 10:2*). Peter also took a prominent role in the early church. It was Peter who took the initiative to appoint a disciple to replace Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus (*Acts 1:15-25*). On the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who explained to the multitudes that they were seeing the promised gift of the Spirit, poured out by God upon His people (*Acts 2:14-36*). It was Peter who, when arrested for speaking about the resurrection of the dead, spoke to the high priest and the assembled Jewish leaders (*Acts 4:1-12[13]*). It was Peter who was led to Cornelius, the first Gentile to be accepted as a follower of Jesus (*Acts 10:1-48*). It was Peter whom Paul visited for 15 days when Paul first came to Jerusalem after his conversion (*Gal. 1:18*). Indeed, describing the circle of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem at that time, Paul identifies three "pillars" of the church: Peter, James the brother of Jesus, and John the beloved disciple (*Gal. 2:9*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Thursday, March 30. [Content in brackets is added.]

20. Read Acts 10&11 and Galatians 1:18-19; 2:9-14. Even after that incredible experience with Cornelius, Peter was not quite ready to admit that Gentiles were as welcome in the kingdom of heaven as were Jews. He had to be openly reprimanded by Paul for his behavior.
21. We need to remember that in the early days of the church, virtually all the Christian believers were Jews. The Jewish people had become very bigoted and prejudiced against all Gentiles,

and those ideas definitely affected the disciples including Peter.

Peter saw the error into which he had fallen, and immediately set about repairing the evil that had been wrought, so far as was in his power. God, who knows the end from the beginning, permitted Peter to reveal this weakness of character in order that the tried apostle might see that there was nothing in himself whereof he might boast. Even the best of men, if left to themselves, will err in judgment. God also saw that in time to come some would be so deluded as to claim for Peter and his pretended successors the exalted prerogatives that belong to God alone. And this record of [199] the apostle's weakness was to remain as a proof of his fallibility and of the fact that he stood in no way above the level of the other apostles.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*\* 198.1.

22. Peter's life ended around A.D. 67 or 68 after being imprisoned in Rome—probably in the Mamertine prison along with Paul—and then, requesting to be crucified upside down because he felt it was too much of an honor to be crucified in the same way as Jesus was.

Before his [Peter's] great fall he was always forward and dictatorial, speaking unadvisedly from the impulse of the moment. He was always ready to correct others and to express his mind before he had a clear comprehension of himself or of what he had to say. But Peter was converted, and the converted Peter was very different from the rash, impetuous Peter. While he retained his former fervor, the grace of Christ regulated his zeal. Instead of being impetuous, self-confident, and self-exalted, he was calm, self-possessed, and teachable. He could then feed the lambs as well as the sheep of Christ's flock.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 5, 334.2-335.0. [Content in brackets is added.]

23. How many of us have had experiences like some of those that Peter had? How often do we fall short of God's ideal for us? What can we learn from those experiences of Peter that will help us in similar situations? As we study the books of 1&2 Peter, see if you can detect a dramatic transformation in the impetuous, proud Peter who was among the first group to be called to be disciples.
24. Try to imagine how you would have responded if you had been Peter in each of these stories. Would you have dared to ask Jesus to allow you to walk on the water? Would you have been willing to commit your future life into the hands of an itinerant Preacher?
25. There was a period of about 3½ years from the time Peter first began following Jesus until that fateful Passover when Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose again. However, we do not know how much time Peter spent with Jesus during the first 1½ years of that ministry while Jesus was primarily working in Judea.
26. Try to imagine the change that came over Peter between that early Friday morning when he denied his Lord three times until a few weeks later when he stood before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-13) and boldly accused them of killing the Messiah!
27. We are told that just before the second coming of Jesus, we may be “compelled to stand singly and alone to explain” our beliefs. (5T 707.2) Will we be surprised to see how confused are our ideas of what we believe is truth? As we study the books of 1&2 Peter, will we learn the necessary lessons?

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