



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

Wednesday Night Crew Summer Series

Presenting PETER: A study in Mark and the Letters of Peter

Come Join Pastor Orleen and the Wednesday Night Crew this Summer beginning 6/9<sup>th</sup>

### Who is this man whom Jesus Loved & Corrected & Taught & Trusted & Rebuked & Gave the Leadership of His Church to?

**WEEK #1:** Power in a name: Simon Peter. Social, Economic, Family Culture. What was it like to live life in Peter's neighborhood? What did this Family Culture ADD to the nascent, embryonic, incipient Church?

**WEEK #2:** Peter in the Gospels – How his life and interaction with Jesus can road map ours as well

#### Part One: A Call to Confession

##### A. Early Convert

One of the first four to become a convert (Jn 1:35-42; Mark 1:16-20; **Mt. 4:18-22**; Lk 4:38)

- Did his early acceptance of Christ influence his preeminence amongst the Twelve?

To "FISH" for People

#### **Matthew 4:18-20** HCSB

<sup>18</sup> As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> "Follow Me," He told them, "and I will make you fish for people!"<sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

#### **Jeremiah 16:16** HCSB Punishment of Exile

<sup>16</sup> "I am about to send for many fishermen" —this is the Lord's declaration— "and they will fish for them. Then I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and out of the clefts of the rocks,

##### B. What happened in **Luke 5:1-11** (only Luke's account includes this interaction)

As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, He was standing by Lake Gennesaret. [Sea of Galilee] <sup>2</sup> He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then He sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat.

<sup>4</sup> When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

<sup>5</sup> "**Master**, (teacher/rabbi)" Simon replied, "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing! But at Your word, I'll let down the nets." [DOUBT #1]

<sup>6</sup> When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, **Lord!**" [DOUBT #2]

<sup>9</sup> For he and all those with him were amazed at the catch of fish they took, <sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners.



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*“Don’t be afraid,” Jesus told Simon. “From now on you will be catching people!” <sup>11</sup> Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed Him.*

VS 10: **5:10** The Greek word for **catch** means “to capture alive,” and its tense suggests continuous action. From now on Peter and the others are continuously to capture people for the kingdom of God  
Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Lk 5:1–10). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

VS 5: Peter doubts Jesus’ ability (in the natural) [Overcome by a miracle]

VS 8: Peter now doubts himself (I am out of my league) [Overcome by a promise]

Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Lk 5:1–10). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

How did this seemingly everyday interaction influence Peter’s life and decisions that followed?

- Peter does what Jesus asks because...
- Jesus overwhelms these four men with a miracle that involves a personal show of His divine power & authority.
  
- What was Peter thinking when he replied  
“Go away from me, Lord, For I am a sinful man!” Lk 5:8
  - a. Moses **Ex 3:5-6** <sup>5</sup> “Do not come closer,” He said. “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” <sup>6</sup> Then He continued, “I am the God of your father,<sup>[a]</sup> the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.
  - b. **Isaiah 6:5** Then I said: Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.
  - c. **Ezekiel 1:28** The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the form of the Lord’s glory. When I saw it, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking.

All three respond with those same words Peter uttered.

All overwhelmed with the LORD’s power and prophetic anointing/call.

What was Peter thinking here?

When the LORD asks you to do something, how do you respond?

**ASK** How does He ask:

Illumination of scripture while you are reading it.

During a message where an example/scripture is shared it just overwhelms you.

He drops a person or a situation into your life.

He speaks into your mind/heart with a word or idea that ‘came out of nowhere’.

ALWAYS scripturally based.

### Part Two: Walking With Jesus

- What was it like for Peter as he was just getting to know Jesus as this leader and miracle worker.



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

- What did he learn from EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS
- Learning from what Jesus said and did
- Applying those lessons to his own life
- Using those experiences to help him make the choices he did later in his life.

Day 1: Jesus gets baptized by John the Baptist prior. Today he is interviewed by Priest and Levites.

Day 2: Next day Andrew and John are hanging with John the Baptist and Jesus walks by  
John affirms JC as “Lamb of God”. Andrew and John hang with JC that day  
Andrew gets Simon to go meet JC

Day 3: JC is heading to Galilee  
He calls Philipp and Nathanael. Andrew and John and Peter are with.

Day 4/5: Travel to Galilee.

**Three days later:** (took two days to travel from Bethsaida)  
Andrew, James, John, Peter, Philipp and Nathanael – Disciples so far

- **The Miracle at Cana** in Galilee **John 2:1-2, 3-11**

*On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and <sup>2</sup> Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding as well.*

Who is invited? With Jesus not being well known yet, why would any of the Disciples be invited unless they were related to the Bride/Groom as well? Or were they also neighbors?

<sup>3</sup> *When the wine ran out, Jesus’ mother told Him, “They don’t have any wine.”*

<sup>4</sup> *“What has this concern of yours to do with Me, woman?” Jesus asked. “My hour has not yet come.”* <sup>5</sup> *“Do whatever He tells you,” His mother told the servants.* <sup>6</sup> *Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained 20 or 30 gallons.*

<sup>7</sup> *“Fill the jars with water,” Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim.* <sup>8</sup> *Then He said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant.” And they did.*

<sup>9</sup> *When the chief servant tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from—though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom <sup>10</sup> and told him, “Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now.”*

<sup>11</sup> *Jesus performed this first sign in Cana of Galilee. **He displayed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.***

### Giving The Best (John 2:1–12)

John the Baptist called Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus had demonstrated to His fledgling disciples an uncanny sense of who they were and what their spiritual futures held. In short order they would witness in Nathanael’s hometown (21:2) the first of the “greater things” Jesus had told Nathanael about (1:50).

How much time elapsed during the events of John 1:19–51? (see vv. 29, 35, 43)

“On the third day” (John 2:1) indicates that the event of John 2:1–12 transpired three days after the incidents of the first chapter. Two days would have been spent in travel from Judea to Galilee, and on the third day the action began.

John 2:1–5 gives the most intimate glimpse in the Bible of the relationship between Jesus and His mother. Jesus’ question, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?” meant, “My dear woman, you and I look at this quite differently.”

How did Mary feel about her Son’s interest in needy people and His ability to deal with their problems?



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How did Jesus respond to the concerns of His mother for her friends?

What do these verses suggest about Jesus' awareness of His mission on earth? (John 2:4; 5:25, 28; 12:23, 27; 16:32; 17:1)

How would each of the following have responded to Jesus' transformation of water into wine? (John 2:6–11)

- The servants
- The bridegroom
- The disciples

What does Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine suggest about His willingness to include your concerns about your friends when you pray for them?

What does Jesus' actions suggest about His concern for our seemingly ordinary problems and needs?

*Consider This*

Read John 2:1–12 and the *WILSB* feature "Water into Wine." What do you think was the spiritual significance of Jesus' miracle at the wedding of Cana<sup>1</sup>

### • Simon's House Guest

After the wedding, Jesus goes to the village of Capernaum.

#### **John 2:12**

*After this, He went down to Capernaum, together with His mother, His brothers, and His disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.*

#### **Mark 1:21-29**

##### **Driving Out an Unclean Spirit**

<sup>21</sup> Then they went into Capernaum, and right away He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. <sup>22</sup> They were astonished at His teaching because, unlike the scribes, He was teaching them as one having authority.

<sup>23</sup> Just then a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out, <sup>24</sup> "What do You have to do with us, Jesus—Nazarene? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

<sup>25</sup> But Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> And the unclean spirit convulsed him, shouted with a loud voice, and came out of him.

<sup>27</sup> Then they were all amazed, so they began to argue with one another, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." <sup>28</sup> News about Him then spread throughout the entire vicinity of Galilee.

##### **Healings at Capernaum**

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John.

#### **Mark 1:29-39**

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. <sup>31</sup> So He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her,<sup>[a]</sup> and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup> When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all those who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town was assembled at the door, <sup>34</sup> and He healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. But He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

##### **Preaching in Galilee**

<sup>1</sup> Snider, J. (1994). *Word in life bible discovery guide: john* (pp. 23–25). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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<sup>35</sup> *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He got up, went out, and made His way to a deserted place. And He was praying there.* <sup>36</sup> *Simon and his companions went searching for Him.* <sup>37</sup> *They found Him and said, "Everyone's looking for You!"*

<sup>38</sup> *And He said to them, "Let's go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come."* <sup>39</sup> *So He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

### **Mark 2:1-5**

*When He entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that He was at home.* <sup>2</sup> *So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and He was speaking the message to them.* <sup>3</sup> *Then they came to Him bringing a paralytic, carried by four men.* <sup>4</sup> *Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above where He was. And when they had broken through, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying.*

<sup>5</sup> *Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*

– Jesus stays at Simon's house

Was Peter's mother-in-law the sister of Mary (Salome), Jesus' mom?

Jesus performs many other healings after this **Mark 1:32-34**

Simon, "Everyone is searching for you" **Mk 1:37**

(Does this show impatience on Peter's part? People need to see you do your thing, Jesus!?! Peter being mistaken on what Jesus is here for. **Mk 8:32-33**)

Disciples: **Mark 2:12**

*"And he got up and immediately picked up the mat and went out before them all, so that they all were astonished and they glorified and praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"*

[Mark 3:21-22, 31-35: Jesus' family is worried over the notoriety and accusations and tried to convince JC to stop. During Jesus' ministry, his brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). While being a house guest, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1). On the sabbath. She immediately resumes her duties of hostess. (This is the first of FIVE healings of women recorded in Mark.)]

- What was this like for Peter? Seeing his mother-in-law healed, the fish miracle, the wine
- What did he learn from EVERYDAY INTERACTION
- Learning from what Jesus said and did
- Applying those lessons to his own life
- Using those experiences to help him make the choices he did later in his life.

- **12 Apostolic Appointments**

12 – Ancient Tribes of Israel

New Covenant Community – Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 34:25-31; 36:24-28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25)(Isaiah 10:2-23; Amos 9:9; Micah 5:3)

Simon is listed first on all lists: Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:13-16; Acts 1:13)

The leader of the 12.

Jesus confirms this later in His ministry.

(Mt 14:28; 15:15; 18:21; 26:35-40; Mk 8:29; 9:5; 10:28; Jn 6:68)



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### **The inner circle of three:** James, John, Peter (Andrew)

- The healing of Jairus's daughter **Mk 5:37**

<sup>36</sup> But when Jesus overheard what was said, He told the synagogue leader, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.” <sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone accompany Him except Peter, James, and John, James’s brother. <sup>38</sup> They came to the leader’s house, and He saw a commotion—people weeping and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.”

<sup>40</sup> They started laughing at Him, but He put them all outside. He took the child’s father, mother, and those who were with Him, and entered the place where the child was. <sup>41</sup> Then He took the child by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl got up and began to walk. (She was 12 years old.) At this they were utterly astounded. <sup>43</sup> Then He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this and said that she should be given something to eat.

- The Transfiguration **Mk 9:2-13**

<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up on a high mountain by themselves to be alone. He was transformed<sup>[a]</sup> in front of them, <sup>3</sup> and His clothes became dazzling—extremely white as no launderer on earth could whiten them. <sup>4</sup> Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good for us to be here! Let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—<sup>6</sup> because he did not know what he should say, since they were terrified.

<sup>7</sup> A cloud appeared, overshadowing them, and a voice came from the cloud:  
This is My beloved Son; listen to Him!

<sup>8</sup> Then suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus alone.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down from the mountain, He ordered them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> They kept this word to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

<sup>11</sup> Then they began to question Him, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

<sup>12</sup> “Elijah does come first and restores everything,” He replied. “How then is it written about the Son of Man that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup> But I tell you that Elijah really has come, and they did whatever they pleased to him, just as it is written about him.”

- Jesus’ final moments in the Garden of Gethsemane **Mk 14:32-42**

### **The Prayer in the Garden**

<sup>32</sup> Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and He told His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” <sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be deeply distressed and horrified. <sup>34</sup> Then He said to them, “My soul is swallowed up in sorrow<sup>[a]</sup>—to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.” <sup>35</sup> Then He went a little farther, fell to the ground, and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. <sup>36</sup> And He said, “Abba, Father! All things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”

<sup>37</sup> Then He came and found them sleeping. “Simon, are you sleeping?” He asked Peter. “Couldn’t you stay awake one hour?”<sup>38</sup> Stay awake and pray so that you won’t enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”



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<sup>39</sup> Once again He went away and prayed, saying the same thing. <sup>40</sup> And He came again and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open.<sup>[b]</sup> They did not know what to say to Him. <sup>41</sup> Then He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come. Look, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Get up; let’s go! See—My betrayer is near.”

- Mount of Olives **Mk 13:3-4** Signs of the End of the Age

<sup>3</sup> While He was sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the temple complex, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, <sup>4</sup> “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to take place?”

[King David’s THREE = 2 Samuel 23:8] [Paul confirms the Three Galatians 2:9 but the James is now Jesus’ brother] (James of Zebedee Martyrdom 12:2)

Jesus’ way of saying, “I want you to not only hear this but to see this and to experience this.” Did He not involve the other Disciples because:

- He did not want Judas there

Jesus’ teaching on HOW to lead contrast to the highly authoritarian leadership of the Pharisees. Peter touches it in 1 Peter 5:1-11.

- **Walking on Water** (right after the feeding of the 5,000)

**Mt 14:13-33** Feeding 5,000

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus heard about it, He withdrew from there by boat to a remote place to be alone. When the crowds heard this, they followed Him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> As He stepped ashore, He saw a huge crowd, felt compassion for them, and healed their sick.

<sup>15</sup> When evening came, the disciples approached Him and said, “This place is a wilderness, and it is already late. Send the crowds away so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

<sup>16</sup> “They don’t need to go away,” Jesus told them. “You give them something to eat.”

<sup>17</sup> “But we only have five loaves and two fish here,” they said to Him.

<sup>18</sup> “Bring them here to Me,” He said. <sup>19</sup> Then He commanded the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup> Everyone ate and was filled. Then they picked up 12 baskets full of leftover pieces! <sup>21</sup> Now those who ate were about 5,000 men, besides women and children.

### **Walking on the Water**

<sup>22</sup> Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup> After dismissing the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone. <sup>24</sup> But the boat was already over a mile from land<sup>l</sup> battered by the waves, because the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup> Around three in the morning, He came toward them walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost!” they said, and cried out in fear.

<sup>27</sup> Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

<sup>28</sup> “Lord, if it’s You,” Peter answered Him, “command me to come to You on the water.”

<sup>29</sup> “Come!” He said.



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*And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me!”*

*<sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus reached out His hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” <sup>32</sup> When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> Then those in the boat worshiped Him and said, “Truly You are the Son of God!”*

“You (singular) of little faith, why did you (singular) doubt?” Specifically to Peter

Peter = A Disciple. Boat = Community of Believers. Wind/Waves = Trials and Tribulations assailing the church (Demonic forces? Rev 13:1 imagery of the abyss)

- Is Peter being portrayed as weak?
- Lacking faith?
- Impulsive?
- Sensationalist?

Did this experience help him reach this conclusion:

### **1 Peter 1:4-5** A Living Hope

*<sup>3</sup> Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. <sup>5</sup> You are being protected by God’s power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

- What was it like for Peter as he was just getting to know Jesus as this leader and miracle worker.
- What did he learn from EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS
- Learning from what Jesus said and did
- Applying those lessons to his own life
- Using those experiences to help him make the choices he did later in his life.

- **Peter’s Confession**

**Matthew 16:13-20** (Mk 8:20) Peter’s Confession of the Messiah

*<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”*

*<sup>14</sup> And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*

*<sup>15</sup> “But you,” He asked them, “who do you say that I am?”*

*<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”*

*<sup>17</sup> And Jesus responded, “Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven.”*

*<sup>20</sup> And He gave the disciples orders to tell no one that He was the Messiah.*

**Luke 9:18-21** Peter’s Confession of the Messiah





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*18 While He was praying in private and His disciples were with Him, He asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”*

*19 They answered, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back.”*

*20 “But you,” He asked them, “who do you say that I am?”*

*Peter answered, “God’s Messiah!”*

### **His Death and Resurrection Predicted**

*21 But He strictly warned and instructed them to tell this to no one,*

### **John 6:67-69 Peter responds for them all**

*67 Therefore Jesus said to the Twelve, “You don’t want to go away too, do you?”*

*68 Simon Peter answered, “Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God!”*

**John 1:40-42** Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. <sup>41</sup> He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah!”<sup>[a]</sup> (which means “Anointed One”), <sup>42</sup> and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, He said, “You are Simon, son of John.<sup>[b]</sup> You will be called Cephas” (which means “Rock”).

“You are the Christ” Mk 1:1, Mt 1:1; Lk 3:21-38; Jn 20:31

**We see Jesus shaping Peter by their everyday interaction and with the circumstances of where a life of loving others for Jesus takes him.**

**Do you see the Jesus shaping in your own life?**



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

### NoTeS:

“The Life and Witness of Peter” by

“Christ” is here a title best rendered as “Messiah.”<sup>24</sup> The term gathers up a long tradition concerning an expected Davidic descendant who restores the dynasty to its former glory and ushers in an unprecedented era of peace, righteousness and prosperity (2 Sam 7:14-17; Is 11; Jer 23:5-8; Ezek 34:23-31). In the ears of the first listeners, this term evoked nationalistic and political aspirations.<sup>25</sup> But is that all Peter intended? Mark’s Gospel begins with a double affirmation: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mk 1:1).<sup>26</sup> Viewed in light of his Gospel as a whole, the title “Son of God” transcends Jewish, messianic nationalism—it points to Jesus’ divine nature. By not affirming the second title, are we to infer that Peter has not yet fully grasped this? So it would seem. It is not until an unnamed centurion makes the climactic confession at the foot of the cross (“Truly this man was God’s Son,” Mk 15:39) that we come full circle and reaffirm the opening confession of the Gospel (Mk 1:1). The problem is that matters are somewhat different in Matthew’s Gospel. He expands Peter’s confession, adding the words, “the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). Luke’s version has “the Messiah of God” (Lk 9:20), but this appears to be functionally equivalent to “Messiah.” Should we then conclude that Matthew’s “Son of the living God” is likewise synonymous with “Messiah”? This seems clearly to be the understanding of the high priest who later questions Jesus: “I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God” (Mt 26:63; cf. Mk 14:61; Lk 22:69). In the OT, even the Hebrew king could be styled as God’s son (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:26-27). Perhaps, then, Peter’s confession in Matthew advances the thought no further than in Mark and Luke. But there is good reason to suppose that it does. Usage of the title “Son of God” demonstrates that it is “one of the most exalted New Testament titles for Jesus, and at times it seems to have been yoked to ‘Messiah’ in order to correct

any inadequacy in the understanding of messiahship and to introduce a divine element.”<sup>27</sup> That this is the case in Matthew 16:16 seems evident by the fact that Jesus addresses him by his full name, “Simon Peter,” praises him for his insight and attributes it to nothing less than a divine disclosure by the Father himself (Mt 16:16-17). To this should be added the manner in which Matthew treats the notion of Jesus as God’s unique Son in his Gospel as a whole (Mt 1:20-23; 3:17; 4:1-11; 17:5). Even though the Markan and Lukan narratives of Peter’s confession at Caesarea do not include the title “Son of God,” earlier episodes in both Gospels reveal that the apostles already recognize in Jesus certain attributes that God alone possesses (Mk 1:27; 2:7; 3:11; cf. Lk 4:41; Mk 4:41; cf. Lk 8:25). In short, they intuitively know that Jesus is in some sense divine. Matthew makes explicit what is implicit in Mark and Luke. But it is also important to note that Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Son of God is at an elementary stage; he and the apostles still have a long way to go in their comprehension of this exalted person.<sup>28</sup> Only in the aftermath of the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost does a full-fledged high Christology suddenly emerge.<sup>29</sup> Thus when we turn to Peter’s epistles, written about thirty years after Peter’s confession, evidence of a greatly enlarged understanding of Jesus’ divine Sonship now appears (e.g., 1 Pet 1:3, 19-21; 2:22; 3:18-19; 2 Pet 1:1, 11, 17; 2:1, 10; 3:18). This brings us to some of the most bitterly disputed words in the NT. What precisely does it mean when Jesus says to Peter, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you



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loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:18-19)? The first question is this: Is Peter himself the rock, or is the rock the confession he makes? In the past, ecclesiastical affiliation virtually dictated one’s response. Roman Catholics affirmed the former and Protestants the latter. This oversimplifies the situation, and today one finds a wider range of nuances. Still, these two options remain the primary contenders. A face-value reading of the text equates Peter with the rock on which the church is to be built. Supporting this is the assumption of a pre-Matthean, Aramaic

any inadequacy in the understanding of messiahship and to introduce a divine element.”<sup>27</sup> That this is the case in Matthew 16:16 seems evident by the fact that Jesus addresses him by his full name, “Simon Peter,” praises him for his insight and attributes it to nothing less than a divine disclosure by the Father himself (Mt 16:16-17). To this should be added the manner in which Matthew treats the notion of Jesus as God’s unique Son in his Gospel as a whole (Mt 1:20-23; 3:17; 4:1-11; 17:5). Even though the Markan and Lukan narratives of Peter’s confession at Caesarea do not include the title “Son of God,” earlier episodes in both Gospels reveal that the apostles already recognize in Jesus certain attributes that God alone possesses (Mk 1:27; 2:7; 3:11; cf. Lk 4:41; Mk 4:41; cf. Lk 8:25). In short, they intuitively know that Jesus is in some sense divine. Matthew makes explicit what is implicit in Mark and Luke. But it is also important to note that Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Son of God is at an elementary stage; he and the apostles still have a long way to go in their comprehension of this exalted person.<sup>28</sup> Only in the aftermath of the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost does a full-fledged high Christology suddenly emerge.<sup>29</sup> Thus when we turn to Peter’s epistles, written about thirty years after Peter’s confession, evidence of a greatly enlarged understanding of Jesus’ divine Sonship now appears (e.g., 1 Pet 1:3, 19-21; 2:22; 3:18-19; 2 Pet 1:1, 11, 17; 2:1, 10; 3:18). This brings us to some of the most bitterly disputed words in the NT. What precisely does it mean when Jesus says to Peter, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:18-19)? The first question is this: Is Peter himself the rock, or is the rock the confession he makes? In the past, ecclesiastical affiliation virtually dictated one’s response. Roman Catholics affirmed the former and Protestants the latter. This oversimplifies the situation, and today one finds a wider range of nuances. Still, these two options remain the primary contenders. A face-value reading of the text equates Peter with the rock on which the church is to be built. Supporting this is the assumption of a pre-Matthean, Aramaic tradition lying beneath the Greek text of Matthew.<sup>30</sup> In Greek the play on words between “Peter” (petros, masc.) and “rock” (petra, fem.) requires a shift in gender. Such is not the case in Aramaic—it is the same word with the same gender in both instances (Kephā) and kephā)). Furthermore, one detects in the larger context of the passage a deliberate parallelism that further strengthens a face-value reading: “You are the Messiah” (Mt 16:16) “you are Peter” (Mt 16:18) “you are a stumbling block” (Mt 16:23) In each case, an individual, whether Jesus or Peter, is the subject of a predication. Though possible, the interpretation that the rock is Peter’s confession seems forced. Rather, Jesus designates Peter as the one who will exercise authority within the movement. The book of Acts amply documents Peter’s leadership role in the early formative years of what later became Christianity.<sup>31</sup> Such an interpretation is a far cry from the fully developed Roman Catholic teaching on the origin of the papacy. One is not logically or historically compelled to acknowledge the latter by affirming Peter (and the apostles) as the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20). Since my concern is with the NT itself and not its later interpretation in church history, I will not pursue it further.<sup>32</sup> The second question concerns the meaning and nature of the authority bestowed on Peter. What does it mean for Peter to have the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” and thereby to “bind” and “loose” (Mt 16:19)? The idiom of “binding and loosing” appears in rabbinic Judaism. In the Mishnah (second-century A.D. codification of oral, rabbinic interpretation of biblical laws), for example, the expression refers to decisions rendered by rabbis, during the Tannaitic period (first two centuries A.D.), concerning actions or activities that were either prohibited (bound) or permitted (loosed). In context, these decisions were part of what is called halakah, that is, rules for the conduct of life. One also finds instances of this terminology in cases where individuals are banned from the synagogue or the ban is repealed.<sup>33</sup>



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The Qumran community likewise employed similar terminology and procedures for determining admittance to membership and disciplining errant members (1QH 5:36; 1QM 5:3; 1Q 22:3, 11; CD 13:10). Peter's keys, then, likely refer to his authoritative role within the new covenant community. The idiom of binding and loosing with respect to judicial decisions regarding errant members also occurs in Matthew 18:18. Peter thus takes the lead in two broad areas: he announces the terms of admittance into the new covenant community and establishes the limits of acceptable behavior within that fellowship. Both kinds of authority were in fact exercised by Peter, as illustrated in the book of Acts (see, e.g., Acts 1:15-26; 2:14-41; 3:17-26; 4:8-12; 5:1-11, 29-32; 8:14-25; 10:34-48; 11:1-18).<sup>34</sup> It is also clear that this authority was not restricted to him; the picture that emerges from Acts is a collegial exercise of the "keys" by apostles and prophets (e.g., Stephen and Philip) within the Jesus movement. Jesus rebukes Peter. Most Bible readers are aware of Simon Peter's ups and downs. One moment he is the hero; the next he is the goat.<sup>35</sup> As seen in this episode (Mt 16:22-23), no sooner has he made a climactic confession of faith, been praised for having received divine revelation and elevated to the role of leader in the church than he is on the receiving end of a stinging rebuke by the Master. In response to Jesus' direct prediction of his approaching death at the hands of the religious authorities, Peter takes him aside and rebukes him: "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you" (Mt 16:22). Jesus discerns in Peter's effort another assault by the Dark Lord. Satan did not withdraw and cede the field after his initial failure to deter Jesus from his redemptive mission (Mt 4:1-11); he bided his time, waiting for another occasion, "an opportune time" (Lk 4:13). Peter unwittingly provides that opportune time. I previously commented on the fact that Peter almost certainly harbors nationalistic hopes for the Jesus movement. Although Jesus has spoken openly about his impending death, Peter cannot fathom how that fits into the politics of the messianic kingdom.<sup>36</sup> Christians in the United States of America can sympathize with Peter; sometimes, we too fall prey to equating nationalism and political preferences with Jesus' kingdom. Like Peter, we are guilty of "setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (Mt 16:23). Jesus' rebuke of Peter is personal but

not unique; that is to say, as the leader and spokesperson for the Twelve, he is rightly chastised. But make no mistake about it, he is not alone in his sentiments; the others also cherish the same confused view as Peter, and his rebuke is theirs as well. Peter will finally get it right. His letters reflect his mature views. In his first letter, he now clearly grasps the necessity of Jesus' sufferings before his glory: "the Spirit of Christ within them [the prophets] indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory" (1 Pet 1:11). Not even a whiff of Jewish, nationalistic messianism may be detected in Peter's epistles. Peter's confession, linked with Jesus' announcement of his impending death, his rebuke of Peter and the requirements for discipleship stand at the midpoint of Jesus' ministry in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 16:13-27; Mk 8:27-38; Lk 9:18-27).<sup>37</sup> The die is now cast, and Jesus "set[s] his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51). Our next chapter retraces Peter's journey to Jerusalem and the climactic events of Passion Week.

Sent from my iPad

- **Witness to the Transfiguration**

Mk 9:2-8; Mt 17:1-8; Lk 9:28-36  
A Glimpse of Jesus' Divine nature.  
Cf. Ex 24; Dan 7:9-14

"Feast of Tabernacles" – Lev 23:23-25, 39-42; Deut 16:13-15

Jesus' does not criticize nor correct Peter "Get up and do not be afraid" Mt 17:7



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

2 Peter 1:16-21 enfold this experience as it states “the prophetic message (is) ... fully confirmed.”

- **Peter and the Temple Tax**

Mt 17:22-27

Voluntary but expected of all Jewish males above 20 years of age, whether living in Palestine or the Diaspora, was levied in the Jewish month Adar (March) Nehemiah 10:32-33

### NOTES:

**5:1** The Lake of Gennesaret is another name for the Sea of Galilee. Since it measures only about 8 by 13 miles, it technically is not a sea and Luke never refers to it as such.

**5:5** The best time for fishing was at night.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. *Calling the first disciples* (5:1–11)

This narrative (vv. 1–11) is similar in certain details to Matthew 4:19–22 and Mark 1:16–20. Luke’s account is much fuller, containing the unique encounter between Jesus and Peter. The climax of each account is a call to “catch men” and the obedience of the disciples. Luke lacks the specific command “Follow me.” The sequence in which this account occurs in Luke is different from that in Mark, who records the call in 1:16–20, before the Capernaum incidents (1:21–28), which Luke put just prior to the present narrative (4:31–41). Naturally these similarities and differences have led scholars to different conclusions about the relationship of the two accounts and the history of the tradition behind them. In the light of Luke’s method of focusing on individuals as a means of them drawing attention to Jesus, we can understand the placement and character of the narrative (cf. G.N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in NT Preaching*, pp. 20, 59). Although Jesus might have called the disciples several times (one such calling has already taken place according to John 1:35–51), to attempt a harmonization by defining the Lukan narrative and that in Matthew and Mark as separate incidents is unnecessary. Luke focuses on Peter, shows the sovereignty and holiness of Jesus in a way Matthew and Mark do not, and alone mentions the total abandonment of the disciples’ possessions as an act of discipleship (cf. 14:33).

The difference in placement is likewise understandable. None of the Synoptics ties the incident into a strict chronological sequence; so the placement is flexible. Luke first establishes the program of Jesus’ ministry (4:16–30, 43). Now he is ready to establish the sovereign lordship of Christ in his relationship first with Peter as representative of the disciples and then with the social outcasts and “sinners” whom he has come to save (5:32; 19:10), such as the man with leprosy (5:12–15) and Levi also (5:27–32).

Elements of this narrative also resemble the post-resurrection story in John 21:1–14. Scholars are not agreed as to the relation between the traditions represented in the two passages (see discussions in Creed, pp. 73–74; Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, pp. 199–200; R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, II, AB [Garden City: Doubleday 1970], pp. 1089–92). The Johannine issues aside, the Lukan narrative is coherent and natural in its context. Arguments for an original post-resurrection setting for Luke’s tradition are unconvincing.

**1–3** “One day” (v. 1) represents the simple *egeneto* (“it happened [that]”; KJV, “it came to pass”). It does not indicate a specific chronological sequence. The geographical description is more precise: “lake” is used instead of the more general word “sea.” Luke mentions the pressure of the crowds, as he occasionally does elsewhere (8:42, 45; 19:3). Their attention is on the “word of God,” another instance of Luke’s focus on the “word” (cf. 4:32, 36). The shore of the lake provided an excellent acoustically serviceable amphitheater. Luke, being observant of detail, draws our attention to two boats (v. 2). Next he singles out Simon as the owner of one of them (v. 3). The description in v. 2 along with the comment in v. 5 serve to emphasize the futility of the night’s work. Luke is careful to mention that Jesus again teaches—now from the boat, from which his voice would carry across the water to the crowd. Not even the next event, miraculous as it is, may, in Luke’s narrative, be allowed to direct attention away from Jesus’ teaching ministry.

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<sup>2</sup> Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Lk 5:1–10). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

**4–5** The sharp contrast between the expert but unsuccessful fisherman and Jesus needs no comment. Jesus' command (v. 4) must have seemed unreasonable to them after their failure during the night (v. 5). Peter, here called by his old name, Simon, demurs; but he does what Jesus says.

**6–10a** Luke now moves quickly to three focal points in his narrative. First he describes the gathering of the fish (v. 6). This extraordinary happening is similar to that in John 21 (cf: also Jesus uncanny ability to direct Peter to a fish with a coin in its mouth [Matt 17:24–27]). The details of the breaking nets and loaded boats (v. 7) help give the narrative the ring of truth. Second, the miracle moves Peter (Luke now uses his full name Simon Peter) who is overcome by awe (v. 9) to abase himself before Jesus (v. 8). He now calls Jesus "Lord" (*kyrios*); with a greater depth of meaning than the common "Sir." Peter is gripped not merely by a sense of his inferiority but of his own sinfulness. The experience of Isaiah 6:5 comes to mind but Peter needs no such vision; he is face to face with Jesus. Luke's reason for including this incident may be not only to portray the confrontation of human sinfulness with Jesus but also to show that to receive the saying grace of Christ a "sinful" (*hamartōlos*, cf. Notes) man must repent. Long before Luke speaks of the Gentiles with their gross sins and their being included in saying grace we are faced with the realization that even Peter who in Luke's time was known for his obedience to the Jewish laws must take his place as a sinner (Danker, *Jesus* p. 65). Luke (v. 10a) mentions James and John but only in passing; the central figures are Jesus and Peter.

**10b–11** The third focal point in the narrative following Peter's obedience to Jesus in letting down the net is Jesus' declaration that he will catch men from then on (v. 10b). Here interpretations vary. But in view of Luke's emphasis on the kindness of God reaching out to embrace all mankind it is more likely to signify a beneficent rather than judgmental ingathering. It presages the widening horizons of both Luke and Acts culminating in a sense in Peter's visions symbolizing the reception of Gentiles into the church and his subsequent witness to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:9–48 esp. vv. 34–35).

After the declaration about catching men the disciples followed Jesus (v. 11). Luke's observation that they left everything which is not stated in Matthew and Mark underscores the condition of discipleship Jesus taught later on (14:33). Compare also his words to the rich ruler (18:22).

### Notes

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- 5** All seven synoptic occurrences of ἐπιστάτα (*epistata*, "Master") are in Luke. In all but one of these (17:13), it is the disciples who use the title. It is used instead of διδάσκαλος (*didaskalos*, "teacher") in 8:24 (cf Mark 4:38), 9:49 (cf. Mark 9:38), and instead of "rabbi" in 9:33 (cf. Mark 9:5). It was a term Luke's readers understood, and it often referred to officers.
- 8** ἁμαρτωλός (*hamartōlos*, "sinner") is one of Luke's characteristic words. Of twenty-two occurrences in the Synoptics, fifteen are in Luke, mainly in material unique to his Gospel and usually assigned to the "L" source. Luke does not use the term pejoratively but compassionately, as a common term applied to those who were isolated from Jewish religious circles because of their open sin, their unacceptable occupation or lifestyle, or their paganism. Luke shows that these sinners are the objects of God's grace through the ministry of Jesus.
- 10** Ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (*apo tou nyn*, "from now on") is an important indicator of transition in Luke (cf. 22:18, 69; Acts 18:6). Ἐση ζωγρῶν (*esē zōgrōn*, "you will catch") is a future periphrastic suggesting continuity of action.

3

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Matthew alone inserts a curious episode considering the temple tax (Mt 17:24-27)

This tax, though voluntary, was expected of all Jewish males above twenty years of age, whether living in Palestine or the Diaspora, and was levied in the Jewish month of Adar, corresponding to March in our calendar (Neh 10:32-33) Matthew thus narrated an episode occurring about a month before the Passover (cf. Mt 17:22). The temple tax was intended to maintain the ritual and sacrificial needs of the Jerusalem temple. Collectors of the half-shekel tax (equivalent of a day's wage and levied on an annual basis) inquire of Peter whether his teacher pays the tax, a detail assuming

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<sup>3</sup> Liefeld, W. L. (1984). [Luke](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 875–877). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.



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Peter's role as a leader within the group.<sup>5</sup> Peter affirms that he does and goes inside the house to inform Jesus about the levy. Jesus asks Simon, "From whom do kings of the earth take toll and tribute? From their children or from others?" Peter's answer, based on his experience in the Galilean fishing industry, is straightforward: "From others." Jesus' response is carefully nuanced. On the one hand, he implies that Peter and the rest of the disciples, because they are members of the kingdom of heaven ("children"), are not obligated to pay the temple tax. As becomes clear in the Gospel accounts, especially John's Gospel, the Jesus movement transcends the ancient traditions and institutions of Judaism, including that magnificent edifice that embodies and symbolizes the central affirmations of the ancestral faith. Jesus' answer thus constitutes an indirect indictment of the current religious authorities in Jerusalem, inasmuch as they fail to acknowledge his message about the kingdom. On the other hand, Jesus decides that his Jewish followers should, for now, pay the tax and avoid unnecessary conflict with the powers that be. The principle of avoiding unnecessary resistance to the gospel message becomes a primary missionary strategy among the early Christians. The apostle Paul, in particular, insists on this point in several of his letters (1 Cor 9), and Peter clearly echoes it in his first epistle as well (1 Pet 2:13-17; 3:16-17).

- **Peter and the Rich Young Ruler**

Mk 10:17-28; Luke 18:18-28; Mt 19:22-27  
"Then, who can be saved?"

Peter and the Passion Week  
Jesus' Appearance and Commission to Simon

**Who is this man whom Jesus Loved & Corrected & Taught & Trusted & Rebuked & Gave the Leadership of His Church to?**

**What adjectives would you use to define him?**

**What were his people skills?**

**Would you want him as your neighbor or hire him as an employee?**

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"LORD, where are you going?"

**John 13:36-38**

<sup>36</sup> "Lord," Simon Peter said to Him, "where are You going?"

Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later."

<sup>37</sup> "Lord," Peter asked, "why can't I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You!"

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Will you lay down your life for Me? I assure you: A rooster will not crow until you have denied Me three times."



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

“Walking in the Master’s Steps” :

Beginning from the End: “The Life and Witness of Peter” by Larry R. Helyer (pages 56-67)

### The Upper Room:

#### **Luke 22:8-13**

<sup>8</sup> *Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover meal for us, so we can eat it.”*

<sup>9</sup> *“Where do You want us to prepare it?” they asked Him.*

<sup>10</sup> *“Listen,” He said to them, “when you’ve entered the city, a man carrying a water jug will meet you. Follow him into the house he enters. <sup>11</sup> Tell the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks you, “Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover with My disciples?’” <sup>12</sup> Then he will show you a large, furnished room upstairs. Make the preparations there.”*

- Why did Jesus just not tell them where?
- What was it like to wait and wonder...did Jesus prearrange this?
- Peter just went and did it. He did it with John. Jesus trusted Peter.

<sup>13</sup> *So they went and found it just as He had told them, and they prepared the Passover.*

#### **Luke 22:1-6**

*The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was drawing near. <sup>2</sup> The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Him to death, because they were afraid of the people. <sup>3</sup> Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, who was numbered among the Twelve. <sup>4</sup> He went away and discussed with the chief priests and temple police how he could hand Him over to them. <sup>5</sup> They were glad and agreed to give him silver. <sup>6</sup> So he accepted the offer and started looking for a good opportunity to betray Him to them when the crowd was not present.*

#### **John 18:1-2** Jesus Betrayed

*<sup>1</sup> After Jesus had said these things, He went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, and He and His disciples went into it. <sup>2</sup> Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with His disciples.*

#### From: **The Life and Witness of Peter by Larry R. Helyer**

Reflecting Peter’s leadership role among the Twelve, Jesus assigns Peter and John the task of preparing a place in the city to observe the Passover meal (Lk 22:8-13).

<sup>15</sup> This detail is important for understanding Jesus’ later arrest.

<sup>16</sup> Peter and John do not know the place where the supper is to be held until after they meet an anonymous man carrying a water jar just inside the city. They are instructed to follow this person to





## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

the home of the unnamed host for the supper and there make preparations (Lk 22:9-13). *None of the other apostles knows the location until they arrive later with Jesus. This secrecy allows Jesus to spend time with his apostles, instructing and preparing them for what is to follow without fear of arrest or interruption.* Luke tells us that Judas had already begun “to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present” (Lk 22:6). What Judas does know, however, is the location where they would all sleep that night, namely, the Garden of Gethsemane (Jn 18:2). After Judas leaves the upper room (Jn 13:21-30), he goes to the authorities and tells them where they can arrest Jesus when only his disciples are present. John’s Gospel significantly augments the Synoptic accounts of the events leading up to the arrest. Especially meaningful for generations of Christians is the so-called Upper Room Discourse of John 13–17. Two episodes in this section feature the apostle Peter. The first is the famous foot-washing incident. In a deeply moving, symbolic action, Jesus assumes the role of a servant and begins washing the feet of each apostle. But when it is Peter’s turn, Peter demurs: “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” (Jn 13:6).<sup>17</sup> On being informed that he will understand what it means later (Jn 13:7), he adamantly refuses: “You will never wash my feet” (Jn 13:8).<sup>18</sup> Once again, Peter’s distorted concept of the Messiah interferes with his understanding of Jesus’ mission. For Peter, it is demeaning for Jesus the Messiah to assume the role of a servant; after all, he is the king of Israel! If there is to be any foot washing, let the apostles wash those of the Master, not vice versa. Jesus’ gentle but firm response puts in sharp relief the symbolic meaning of the gesture and its theological significance. Jesus’ action speaks of two realities: identification with him and imitation of him. To be the recipient of undeserved grace and mercy is the essence of being a member of the new covenant community. Accordingly, humility is the hallmark of membership and the pattern for mutual relations among family members. “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (Jn 13:15). Self-giving love authenticates those who belong to Jesus: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). Peter did eventually get the point, as a thoughtful reading of his first letter eloquently testifies. In the letter, the voice of one who experienced self-giving love in action appeals to the reader to replicate the pattern (1 Pet 3:8; 4:8-10; 5:1-6). A second moment of high drama involving Peter occurs in the upper room. After the shocking disclosure that one of them would betray Jesus, Simon Peter signaled to “the one whom Jesus loved” and who “was reclining next to him” (Jn 13:23) to ask Jesus who the betrayer was.<sup>19</sup> One may be fairly certain what would have happened had Jesus plainly told Peter who it was (see Jn 18:10). Judas’ sudden departure did not arouse suspicion because he was the treasurer and some thought Jesus instructed him either to buy provisions for the feast or make a donation to the poor (Jn 13:29-30). Another unsettling disclosure follows. Jesus informs the apostles that he is leaving them. Simon Peter speaks for all the apostles: “Where are you going?” (Jn 13:36). When told he cannot follow Jesus now but will do so later, Peter inquires: “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you” (Jn 13:37). Then the bombshell: “Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times” (Jn 13:38). All four Gospels narrate Peter’s denial. Luke, however, adds unique material by informing us that Satan requested permission to test Peter’s faithfulness, recalling the book of Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7). Jesus prays that Peter’s faith will not fail and then, knowing full well he will momentarily stumble, he predicts Peter’s full restoration to leadership (Lk 22:31-34). The Synoptics all narrate Peter’s vociferous denial that he would ever deny knowing the Lord (Mk 14:29; Mt 26:33; Lk 22:33). In just a few short hours, Peter’s emphatic resolve crumbled. Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane. During the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry, he daily taught the people and engaged in discourse and debate with the religious leaders. Things were clearly heading for a showdown. During the days leading up to the Passover sacrifice and meal, Jesus stayed with the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in the village of Bethany. Bethany is on the eastern slopes of Olivet, out of view from Jerusalem to the west. The religious leaders determined to arrest Jesus and put him to death. However, they had a problem: Jesus was very popular among the thousands of Galilean pilgrims who now flooded the city. Rather than risk a riot by publicly arresting Jesus, they tried to arrest him secretly. Since Jewish tradition specified that Passover night be spent within the environs of greater Jerusalem, and Bethany was beyond these limits, Jesus selects another place to sleep that night.<sup>20</sup> The Garden of



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Gethsemane, just across the Kidron Valley, at the foot of Mount Olivet, had a dense olive grove and cave, providing a safe house within proximity to the Temple Mount. According to the Gospel of John, “Jesus often met there with his disciples” (Jn 18:2). After leaving the upper room, Judas reveals the location of this hideout to the authorities. He not only leads them to the spot but also identifies Jesus for them in the darkness of night by his infamous kiss (Mk 14:44-46). Peter’s role in the ensuing events is less than stellar (Mk 14:32-50). Soon after Jesus arrives at the garden with his disciples, he requests the presence of the inner three and withdraws with them for prayer. In deep, inner turmoil, Jesus then withdraws from the three and requests that they watch with him in prayer (Mk 14:33-34). For their part, exhausted and unaware of imminent danger, they fall asleep. In Mark’s Gospel, when Jesus returns and finds them asleep, he singles out Peter and reproves him: “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mk 14:37-38). Jesus withdraws once again for prayer. This sequence happens two more times (Mk 14:40-42), anticipating Peter’s impending threefold denial. In keeping with Mark’s less than exemplary depiction of the disciples, he informs his readers: “their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to say to him” (Mk 14:40). I think we hear an echo of Peter’s failure to stay awake in his admonition to Christians in Asia Minor: “Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves. . . . Be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. . . . Discipline yourselves, keep alert” (1 Pet 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). Once Peter realizes what is happening, he springs into action. Wielding a sword—there were only two swords among the entire group and, not surprisingly, he has one of them (Lk 22:38)—Peter lops off the right ear of one of the high priest’s servants, a man named Malchus (Jn 18:10). But instead of a melee breaking out, the Master squelches all resistance by a stern rebuke (“No more of this!” [Lk 22:51; cf. Mt 26:52]). According to John’s Gospel, the rebuke was directed at Peter: “Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (Jn 18:11). In keeping with what we have already seen, Peter has no idea what that cup entails. A suffering Messiah is not on his radar. Then, remarkably, Jesus proceeds to heal the ear of Malchus (Lk 22:51). Once the apostles realize Jesus is not going to resist, they escape into the night. This episode becomes paradigmatic (serving as a model) for Peter’s later understanding of how Christians should react to betrayal, persecution and opposition. What a different approach permeates Peter’s parenthesis (exhortation) in his letter to believers under fire than the one he himself displayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (1 Pet 2:21-23; 3:13-17; 4:1, 12-19). Peter in the courtyard of the high priest. Peter and an unnamed disciple, whom I take to be John, double back and follow Jesus and his captors from afar to the home of the high priest (Mk 14:54; Jn 18:15-16). Throughout the early morning hours, however, as the reality of what is happening sinks in, Peter experiences a meltdown while sitting around a fire with the servants of the high priest. He vehemently denies even knowing Jesus. Luke poignantly portrays what happens after the third, decisive denial: “The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly” (Lk 22:61-62).<sup>21</sup>

Peter’s denial can never be taken back. It happened, and he had to live with the painful memory. But rather than letting his failure cripple him spiritually and emotionally, he used it as a means of building up the flock of God (cf. Paul in 1 Tim 1:12-16). He becomes a living illustration of forgiveness and a second chance. He possesses a degree of compassion and understanding for wavering believers that others, sometimes rather self-righteously, are incapable of showing. We hear a tenderness in Peter’s first epistle that springs out of a bitterly disappointing failure in his own life (1 Pet 5:1-11). Jesus’ prayer for Peter was wonderfully answered: “I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:32). These words prepare Peter for the missionary role he performs in volume two of Dr. Luke’s account of Christian beginnings.<sup>22</sup> Believers in Rome and “the exiles of the Dispersion” (1 Pet 1:1) were greatly encouraged and comforted by the story of the big fisherman’s failure and subsequent forgiveness. Jesus appears to Simon on the first day of the week. We do not know where Peter went after his denial (Lk 22:62). He is not mentioned as being present at the cross, in contrast to “the beloved disciple” (Jn 19:26-27). Though perhaps he was among the “great number of people” who followed



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Jesus to the cross, more likely, he stayed away, especially in light of his overwhelming sense of failure at having denied the Lord.<sup>23</sup> All four Gospels tell us that the women who discovered the empty tomb on the first day of the week and heard the angelic announcement about Jesus' resurrection ran and informed "the eleven and . . . all the rest" (Mk 16:1-8 [the shorter ending of Mark]; Mt 28:8; Lk 24:9; Jn 20:2). Peter was among this group and, in company with "the other disciple" (Jn 20:3), ran to the tomb to see for himself (Lk 24:12; Jn 20:3-10). It may be that the home of John Mark's mother served as a meeting place for the apostles. This may also have been the residence having a guest room, an upper room, in which the Last Supper was observed and served as a regular meeting place (Acts 1:6, 13-14).<sup>24</sup> More important, however, is the early tradition that Jesus appeared to Peter and that this appearance was the first to an apostle (1 Cor 15:5). The gospel tradition is also quite clear that Jesus first appeared to women disciples, Mary Magdalene being the first believer to see the risen Lord (Mk 16:9 [the longer ending of Mark]; Mt 28:8; Jn 20:14-18). It has often been observed how remarkable this fact is given the generally low credibility accorded women as witnesses in Second Temple Judaism.<sup>25</sup> This datum argues for the historicity of the resurrection accounts in that one would hardly suppose the disciples invented the story.<sup>26</sup> The fact that the Lord appeared to Peter before any of the rest of the apostles seems to have a twofold significance: it makes clear that Peter was truly forgiven for his denial ("But go, tell his disciples and Peter" [Mk 16:7]; "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" [Lk 24:34, italics added]), and it anticipates his future role as leader of the Jesus movement in which he will "feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-19). A mystery surrounds Jesus' appearance to Peter; we have no narrative account of the circumstances. According to Luke's Gospel, on the first day of the week, Jesus joins two disciples, one named Cleopas (Lk 24:18), on the road to Emmaus and spends a considerable part of the afternoon with them (Lk 24:29). After recognizing Jesus, they hasten back to Jerusalem to inform the disciples. On their arrival, however, the disciples who remained in Jerusalem confirm this report with their own joyous announcement: "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34). But if Jesus was at Emmaus, how could he have appeared to Simon? Surely, the anonymous disciple was not Simon, or Luke would have said so. Raymond Brown conjectures that this is a "stray item of kerygmatic proclamation that Luke has fitted awkwardly into his condensed Gospel sequence."<sup>27</sup> But given that several morning hours were available for such an encounter, I hardly see how this counts as a problem. Jesus' appearance to Simon was probably not long after his appearance to Mary Magdalene in the garden (Jn 20:11-18). In Jerusalem, the sun rises before 6:00 a.m. in the month of Nisan, and the women set out for the tomb before sunrise (Jn 20:1; Mk 16:2).<sup>28</sup> The distance from the upper room to the holy sepulchre is only about half a mile.<sup>29</sup> If we allow time for them to walk to the site and then return (hurriedly) to the disciples with their news and have Peter and John run to the tomb and then return, this could all have transpired before 8:00 a.m. This would allow for a period of several hours before Jesus appears at Emmaus (Lk 24:29). Since Jesus is now in his glorified state, distance is no longer a problem! Jesus' Appearance and Commission to Simon The final Gospel episode about Simon occurs back in Galilee, along the lake where his initial call took place (Jn 21). In this respect, his story comes full circle. But as it turns out, this is the beginning of a new phase—in his life as well as that of the Jesus movement. So, what happened on that momentous occasion? Seven disciples (Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two unnamed disciples) are together at the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 21:1). Most likely they are at Capernaum, where Peter and the sons of Zebedee lived. Perhaps Andrew is one of the unnamed disciples (Jn 1:40-41, 44; 6:8; 12:22). Peter suggests they all go fishing. What should we make of this? Many preachers and commentators chastise Peter and the others for slipping back into their old ways and forgetting their commission to preach the gospel. But this goes beyond what can fairly be inferred. Mark and Matthew make it clear that soon after his resurrection, Jesus instructed the apostles to meet him in Galilee (Mk 16:7; Mt 28:7, 10). After completing the Festival of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem, they return to Galilee in anticipation of meeting up with Jesus. This, according to Matthew, is precisely what happened (Mt 28:16, 17). It seems reasonable to assume that before the entire group assembled, there was some down time. What is more natural for these men than going back out on the lake and doing what they have done since their youth? Furthermore, there may have been some pressing financial needs in their families



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that a good catch could alleviate. As it turns out, they haul in a windfall, assisting them in the transition to full-time ministry.<sup>30</sup> At first, however, the fish are not biting. In fact, the entire night nets nothing. As morning light dawns, Jesus suddenly appears along the beach and calls out to the weary fishermen: “Children, you have no fish, have you?” To their dejected report, Jesus orders them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat. When they do so, their nets suddenly ensnare a huge school of fish, including 153 large ones to be exact (Jn 21:11).<sup>31</sup> Memories are activated; the story has come full circle (cf. Lk 5:1-11); the “disciple whom Jesus loved” told Peter, “It is the Lord!” (Jn 21:7).<sup>32</sup> Peter, who had been working naked, put on his loincloth and swam to shore. The others row the boat in, dragging the net behind. When they all get ashore, Jesus has a fish breakfast, cooked over coals, already prepared for them. Jesus “took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish” (Jn 21:13). Once again, memories are jogged and the disciples remember the miraculous feeding of the multitudes with five loaves and two fishes (Jn 6:1-14). If there were any lingering doubts about how they will manage in the future, this incident vividly reinforces Jesus’ earlier assurance: “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear . . . your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:25, 32-33). What next follows is the climactic moment of the episode. Jesus asks Peter, three times, if he loves him.<sup>33</sup> The thrice-repeated question is not incidental; it is intentional, gently but painfully reminding Peter of his threefold denial. This time Peter does not swear or take an oath; his only recourse is to appeal to Jesus’ extraordinary understanding of the human heart: “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you” (Jn 21:17; cf. 1:48; 2:24-25). Each time Peter reaffirms his love for Jesus, Jesus counters by commissioning him: “Feed my lambs” (Jn 21:15), “Tend my sheep” (Jn 21:16), and “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17).<sup>34</sup> The imagery of shepherd and sheep points to Peter’s primary role as pastor of the emerging church. This is a deeply moving moment for Peter. He is forgiven and re-instated as leader. The Master has full confidence in him, and the ensuing history of the early church confirms that confidence was not misplaced. It is no accident that Peter’s first epistle employs the same metaphor to remind the elders in the house churches of Asia Minor of their primary responsibility: “I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge” (1 Pet 5:1b-2a). There is another aspect of being a shepherd. In the words of Jesus, “the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). The last recorded conversation in John’s Gospel is somber but inspiring: Peter will eventually follow Jesus in death by crucifixion (Jn 21:18-19). This fulfills Peter’s earlier, vehement claim: “Lord . . . I will lay down my life for you” (Jn 13:37; cf. Lk 23:33). Jesus’ revelation powerfully shapes Peter’s consciousness. He knows in advance that he will imitate his Lord through death on a cross. “I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things” (2 Pet 1:14-15). Though he lacked the courage the first time he faced this prospect, he will not fail a second time. In the upper room, Peter had asked Jesus, “Lord, where are you going?” To this question, Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward” (Jn 13:36, italics added).<sup>35</sup> No wonder the shadow of the cross falls across Peter’s theology. Peter then inquires about the destiny of the beloved disciple. Jesus’ response is terse and enigmatic: “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!” (Jn 21:21-22). An editorial comment implies that a misunderstanding of this saying was already widespread: Jesus did not affirm that the beloved disciple would live until Jesus’ glorious return. The point of the saying is that the time of a disciple’s death lies entirely in Jesus’ hands and prying into such matters should not be a concern. What matters is being a faithful witness and resting in the Lord of life and death. Peter got the point: “Let those suffering in accordance with God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good” (1 Pet 4:19). This concludes my sketch of Peter’s life as reconstructed from the Gospels. The next phase of Peter’s life witnesses an extraordinary growth and expansion of the Jesus movement. In fact, under Peter’s pastoral oversight, it begins to transform into a universal faith called Christianity.

Sent from my iPad



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

### NOTES:

**4:18–20 I will make you fishers of men:** This allusion to Jer. 16:16 was used to call Peter and Andrew to discipleship and a life of ministry.<sup>4</sup>

**Jeremiah 16:16 HCSB** Punishment of Exile

*<sup>16</sup> “I am about to send for many fishermen” —this is the Lord’s declaration—“and they will fish for them. Then I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and out of the clefts of the rocks,*

## CHAPTER 18

# FISHING THE SEA OF GALILEE

Matt 13:47–50; Luke 5:1–11; John 21:6

J. Carl Laney

### KEY POINTS

- Some symbols of early Christianity found their origins in the fishing industry.
- The Sea of Galilee, which is the lowest freshwater lake in the world, was the first pick for Jews to fish from in ancient times.
- Understanding how different types of fishing nets were used enriches our understanding of certain events and parables of Jesus.

Four of Jesus’ disciples were fishermen before they became followers of Jesus: Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Matt 4:18–21). Jesus was familiar with their work as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. When he called them as his disciples he invited them to become “fishers of men” (Matt

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<sup>4</sup> Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). [\*The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version\*](#) (Mt 4:18–20). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.



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4:19). The fish became a symbol in early Christian art because the Greek word for “fish” (*ichthys*, ἰχθύς) provides the initial letters of the words in an early Christian creed. The first letter, *iota*, is the initial letter in the Greek word for “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς, Ἰησοῦς). The second letter, *chi*, is the first letter in the word for “Christ” (*Christos*, Χριστός). The third letter, *theta*, is the first letter in the Greek word for “God” (*theos*, θεός). The fourth letter, *upsilon*, represents the Greek word for “son” (*huios*, υἱός). And the last letter, *sigma*, is the first letter in the Greek word for “Savior” (*sōtēr*, σωτήρ). Taken together the letters in the Greek word for “fish” symbolize the message “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior.” As it does today, the early symbol of the fish could be used to identify a believer in Jesus without the need for verbal communication.

Another early Christian symbol taken from the fishing industry was the anchor: a symbol of security and hope in turbulent times (Heb 6:19). Images of the anchor and the fish appear in early Christian art and inscriptions. These symbols, along with the biblical references to fishing and fishermen, make it imperative for interpreters of the Bible to be familiar with the fishing industry of ancient times.

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“Fish” (ἰχθύς): Early Christian Symbol

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Luke 5:1–11 records Jesus’ early ministry in Galilee. His baptism and temptation had already taken place (Luke 3:21–4:13). John the Baptist had identified Jesus as the “Lamb of God” and “Son of God” (John 1:29–34). Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel had followed Jesus to Galilee and were present with Jesus in Cana when he performed his first miracle (John 2:1–11). They had traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem for Passover (John 2:23) and had returned to Galilee after their excursion through Samaria (John 4:3–42). Jesus had called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to become fishers of men (Matt 4:18–22). Luke 5:1–11 records a second call to follow Jesus.

While some scholars regard Matt 4:18–22, Mark 1:16–20, and Luke 5:1–11 as parallel accounts, Robert Thomas and Stanley Gundry believe the features of Luke 5:1–11 are sufficiently distinct to regard it as a different event. In Matthew and Mark’s account, the brothers Peter and Andrew were casting their nets, probably from the shore. In Luke’s account the brothers were lowering the nets from their boat. Luke’s account records that they took a great catch of fish. Matthew and Mark say nothing about a catch. It appears that the brothers went back to their fishing work after the first call by Jesus (Matt 4:18–22). But after responding to Jesus’ second call (Luke 5:1–11), they remained with Jesus permanently.

### FISHING IN BIBLICAL TIMES

During biblical times, fish came mainly from the Mediterranean Sea, the Nile River, the Jordan River, and the Sea of Galilee. The people of Tyre fished the Mediterranean (Ezek 26:5) and sold their salted or dried fish in Jerusalem (Neh 13:16). The Nile was an important fishing grounds for the Egyptians, as indicated by the judgment on Egypt in Isa 19:8: “all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn” (NASB). Various methods of fishing are illustrated in ancient Egyptian art. That the Jordan River contained fish is evident from the Medeba mosaic map which shows fish swimming upstream away from the salty waters of the Dead Sea. However, the tamarisk trees



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growing along the banks of the Jordan—the “thickets by the Jordan” (Jer 12:5; 49:19; 50:44)—made access difficult and dangerous. In the end, the Sea of Galilee was the most important local fishery for the Jews in ancient times.

### THE SEA OF GALILEE

The Sea of Galilee is located in the Rift Valley between the Hula Basin and the Jordan Valley. This harp-shaped freshwater lake is fed by the Jordan River which flows into the sea at the north and exits at the southern end to continue its journey south to the Dead Sea. It was known as “Chinnereth” (“harp”) in the Old Testament period (Num 34:11, Josh 13:27). The New Testament refers to it as the Lake of Gennesareth (Luke 5:1) due to its proximity to the plain of Gennesareth along its northwestern shore. It also takes the name “Sea of Tiberius” from the name of the new capital of Galilee built by Herod Antipas in honor of the emperor. The name most familiar to readers of the Gospels is the “the Sea of Galilee” (Matt 4:18, 15:29; Mark 1:16, 7:31, John 6:1). In modern Israel it is called Yam [“sea”] Kinneret or simply “the Kinneret.”

Video: The Sea of Galilee  
“*Situated in a basin 680 feet  
below sea level with the  
Golan Heights on the east  
and steep hillsides on the  
west, the Sea of Galilee is  
the lowest freshwater lake  
on earth.*”

The Sea of Galilee is approximately thirteen miles from north to south and eight miles from east to west, covering an area of sixty-four square miles. The maximum depth is 150 feet. Situated in a basin six hundred eighty feet below sea level with the Golan Heights on the east and steep hillsides on the west, the Sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake on earth. During the summer months the airstream rising off the surrounding hills comes in contact with the cooler sea-to-land breeze from the Mediterranean, creating high winds and unexpected storms. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus provides a helpful description of the sea and comments that “its water is sweet to the taste and excellent to drink: ... it is perfectly pure” (War 3.506–507). He also reports that the region around the lake is “rich in soil and pasturage” (War 3.42). The sea was surrounded in ancient times by numerous cities, including Tiberias, Magdala, Capernaum, and Bethsaida, as well as fifteen active harbors.

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Atlas: The Sea of Galilee



## Presenting Peter Who is this man called Peter?

### FISH IN THE SEA OF GALILEE

Most of what we know about fish and fishing in the Sea of Galilee comes from the experience and expertise of a Galilean fisherman, Mendel Nun, who immigrated to Palestine from Latvia in 1939 and lived at Kibbutz En Gev until his death in 2010. Having spent his life fishing and exploring the ancient harbors of the Kinneret, Mendel became the foremost expert on this subject. His books and articles are primary resources for research on fishing the Sea of Galilee.

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#### Three Groups of Fish in the Sea of Galilee

Fishing has always been an important commercial activity on the Sea of Galilee. Josephus reports that “the lake contains species of fish different, both in taste and appearance, from those found elsewhere” (War 3.508–509).

There are eighteen species of indigenous fish in the Sea of Galilee, ten of which are important commercially. These can be divided into three groups: the musht, the barbels, and the sardines. The word “musht” is Arabic for “comb,” referring to the long dorsal fin on this group of fish. The Hebrew name is “amnun,” meaning “nurse fish,” because even when the young fish are hatched the parent fish keep watch over them for a few days. The most important species of this group are the Talapia Galilea, which can grow to about sixteen inches in length. These tasty but boney fish are served today in Israel’s restaurants as “St. Peter’s fish.” The musht gather in the shallow shoals in the northern part of the Sea of Galilee during the winter months and disperse when the water warms in the spring. This probably accounts for the disciples being engaged in a fishing enterprise near Capernaum before being called by Jesus.

The second group of fish are the “barbels,” which are members of the carp family. The classic characteristic of this variety are the barbs at the corners of their mouths. The Long Headed Barbel has a narrow silvery body and a pointed head. It can reach about thirty inches in length. The *Barbus Canis* is slightly smaller in size but features larger scales. Both species have been fished commercially since the biblical period and remain popular for Sabbath meals and Jewish feasts.

The third group of fish in the Sea of Galilee are the Kinneret sardines. These are the smallest commercial fish in the Kinneret, yet they amount to about half the yearly catch. The Kinneret sardines resemble saltwater sardines and are found in large schools. The sardines are preserved by pickling and can be found today on the breakfast buffet at Israeli hotels.

Catfish are the largest indigenous fish found in the Kinneret, but since they have skin instead of scales, they are not kosher and cannot be eaten according to Mosaic law (Lev 11:9–11). Referring to it by its Greek name (*korokinos*, “Water Raven”), Josephus reports that fish of this variety can be found by the springs near Capernaum (War 3.521).

### FISHING AND FISH NETS

More than a dozen ancient harbors have been located along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. These harbors provided safe havens for fishing and passenger boats when strong winds and storms stirred the otherwise placid sea. During the years between 1973 and 1986 when the water level on the Kinneret was quite low, the foundations of these ancient harbors and anchorages were exposed and carefully surveyed.<sup>7</sup> Discoveries included ancient stone anchors, mooring stones, fishing net sinkers, and a well preserved two thousand year-old wooden boat.





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### Infographic: “Jesus Boat”

While English translations of the Bible typically use just one word to refer to fishing nets, there are several different kinds of nets which can be distinguished in the Gospels. The [drednet](#) (*sagēnē*, σαγήνη) is the oldest type of net. It is made up of a long wall of net, about a football field in length and about ten feet wide. The net has floats on the top and sinkers on the bottom. The drednet is spread out about a hundred yards off shore and parallel to it. The net is then dragged ashore by ropes on either end, surrounding and capturing the fish as it is pulled ashore. After the catch, the net must be dried and mended. In Matthew 13:47–48 Jesus refers to the drednet in his [parable about the kingdom of heaven](#). After the catch, the fishermen must remove the bad fish (those without scales) that cannot be eaten from those that can be offered for sale.

The cast-net (*diktyon*, δίκτυον) is a circular net, something like a parachute, with weights around the outer edge to make the net sink into the water. This net is used by a single fisherman who arranges the net on his arm and then casts the net into the water with his opposing arm. The net spreads out like a parachute and falls into the water. The weights attached to the outer edges of the net pull it to the bottom, trapping the fish.

There are two ways fish can be retrieved from the cast-net. First, the fisherman may wade around the perimeter of the net, removing the fish one-by-one. Second, he may wade around the net, gathering the sinkers and then pulling the net with the fish to shore or hoisting the net into the boat. Although cast-nets are no longer used commercially on the Kinneret, they are often used in a demonstration for tourists enjoying a boat ride across the lake. The cast-net is mentioned in Mark 1:16–18 where Jesus saw Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea. Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.” The two left their cast-nets and followed Jesus.

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### Ancient Harbors of the Sea of Galilee

The trammel net is the only kind that was used in ancient times and continues in use by commercial fishermen on the Sea of Galilee today. The trammel net is a compound net consisting of three layers of nets connected together. There are two exterior walls that have large mesh. The middle layer is a net made of much smaller mesh, about an inch or an inch and a half square. While there is no distinct Greek word for the trammel net, [the plural “nets”](#) (*diktya*), rather than the singular “net” (*diktyon*), distinguishes them in the Gospels. Trammel nets are about a hundred feet long, but are always attached together in a series. A set of trammel nets can extend for a distance of a hundred or more yards.

Fishing with a trammel net in ancient times was always done during the night when the fish could not see the threads of the net. Modern fishermen have nylon nets which can be used during the day. Weights on the trammel net pull it down into the water while floats keep the top side of the wall near the surface. After setting the net, fishermen enter the water near the shore making noise and splashing with their oars. The fleeing fish attempt to swim away but become trapped in the small mesh net of the trammel. The trammel net is probably the type referred to in Mark 1:19–20 and Matt 4:21–22 where the Gospel writers report that James and John were mending their nets. The plural “nets” suggests that they were working on the three layered trammel net. The trammel net also appears to be the one referred to in Luke’s account of the great catch of fish (Luke 5:1–7)



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and John’s account of the miraculous catch during Jesus’ third resurrection appearance (John 21:3–11).

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The most familiar means of fishing for modern sports enthusiasts is with a hook and line. This method is well attested in ancient Assyrian reliefs and Egyptian art. When the tax collectors asked Peter, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?” (Matt 17:24 NIV), Peter replied, “Yes,” and then went to consult Jesus to see if he had answered correctly. Jesus told Peter, “Go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin” (Matt 17:27 NIV). Peter did as he was told and found a coin sufficient to pay the tax for both himself and Jesus.

### Infographic: First-Century Fishing Boat

Commercial fishing has always been hard work. Rowing heavy wooden boats and hauling in heavy nets with weights and floats was a job fit only for men with strength and stamina. The fishermen worked most of the night and then cared for the fish and mended their nets during the day. The catch could be sold fresh in local markets. To transport the catch to more distant markets, the fish could be sun-dried, pickled, or preserved with salt. Magdala (the home of Mary Magdalene) became a central point for processing the salted Kinneret sardines for shipping out of Galilee.

## LUKE 5:1–11

While some scholars believe this text is a variant of the story of the miraculous catch in John 21, the differences are too many and too great to identify it as such. Luke is recounting an event that took place at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in connection with his call of Peter, James, and John to become fishers of men. John 21, on the other hand, records an event that took place at a meeting of Jesus and his apostles after his resurrection.

Luke describes the situation in Luke 5:1, where Jesus is standing “by the lake of Gennesaret” while teaching a crowd that is pressing in on him. Luke uses the name “lake of Gennesaret” (*limnēn Gennēsaret*)—as does Josephus in his description (War 3.506)—whereas the other Gospels refer to it as a “sea” (*thalassa*, θάλασσα). Luke 5:1 is also the only place in the Gospels where the name Gennesaret is used rather than Galilee. Josephus explains that the lake takes its name from the “adjacent territory,” clearly referring to the broad fertile plain along the northwest shore south of Capernaum (War 3.506).

As the eager listeners were “crowding around” (*epikeisthai*) him to hear the word of God, Jesus saw two boats at the water’s edge. The fishermen had returned from a night of fishing and were washing their nets in preparation for the next day’s work. Luke records that Jesus got into Peter’s



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boat and asked him to push it out a little way from the land (Luke 5:3). Then he sat down and continued his teaching from the boat. While most people stand while teaching in modern times, it was customary in the biblical period for rabbis to sit and teach (see Matt 23:2).

When Jesus had finished speaking to the crowd on the shore, he instructed Peter, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4 NIV). The words of Jesus reveal clearly the kind of net Peter was using. It was a trammel net with weights on the bottom and floats (probably gourds) on the top. The trammel net would be lowered into “deep water,” and the fishermen would splash with their oars, driving the fish toward the net to become trapped by the small mesh in the middle layer of the net. Peter’s reply—“Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything” (Luke 5:5 NIV)—reflects the fact that fishing with a trammel net was customarily done at night when the fish could not see the net. Yet in obedience to Jesus, Peter and his companions maneuvered the boat into deep water and lowered the net.

As any fisherman will tell you, catching fish is a thrilling and memorable experience; and what a memorable day this was for Peter! The trammel net captured such a quantity of fish that it began to break apart! Mendel Nun reports that a good night’s catch with a trammel net can result in a hundred to two hundred pounds of fish and even more during the peak of the musht season.

A trammel net is usually lowered a dozen times during a night’s work. The wiggling fish are extracted individually from the narrow mesh of the net. But with a large catch, the trammel net is hauled into the boat like a bundle with the fish tangled inside. This was the case described by Luke here. In fact, the catch was so large that two boats were required, and even then, the boats began to sink under the weight of the nets and the catch.

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Peter immediately recognized that this was no ordinary night’s catch! To catch such a quantity of fish *during the day* with a trammel net was nothing short of miraculous. Peter spoke to Jesus saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man” (Luke 5:8 NASB). This is reminiscent of Isaiah’s response when he saw the vision of the Lord (Isa 6:5). Leon Morris observes, “Peter recognized the hand of God and that drove him to realize his own sinfulness.” It is probably significant that Peter goes from addressing Jesus as “Master” (*epistatēs*, ἐπιστάτης) in Luke 5:5 to addressing him as “Lord” (*kyrios*, κύριος) in Luke 5:8. While the designation *kyrios* may have the sense of “sir,” referring to any person in high position, Peter’s use of the term “raises Jesus above the human level.” As a career fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, Peter recognized the significance of the enormous catch. It was a miracle.

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Peter's partners in his fishing enterprise were "James and John, the sons of Zebedee" (Luke 5:10). Luke then records the sequel to the miracle. First, Jesus commands Peter, "Don't be afraid." The present imperative of prohibition could be rendered "Stop being afraid." Peter's reaction to the miracle in Luke 5:8 recalls the response of Manoah and his wife when they encountered the Angel of the Lord: "We will surely die, for we have seen God" (Judg 13:22). Having been reassured by Jesus, Peter is now informed of his new calling: "From now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10 NASB). The present tense of the participle "catch" (*zōgrōn*) indicates continuous action. The Greek word ζωγρέω (*zōgreō*) means "capture alive." Peter's new career would be "catching" living souls for the kingdom instead of carrying dead fish to the market.

Luke brings his record of this encounter to a conclusion in Luke 5:11. Convinced of the worthiness of the call they had been given, Peter and his partners "pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed" Jesus (NIV). As noted above, this was not Jesus' first call of these fishermen. The first call is recorded in Matt 4:18–22. Luke 5:1–11 records their second call to become fishers of men. They appear to have returned to their fishing after the first call. But now they "left everything" and became permanent followers of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Laney, J. C. (2016). [Fishing the Sea of Galilee](#). In B. J. Beitzel & K. A. Lyle (Eds.), *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels* (pp. 165–173). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.