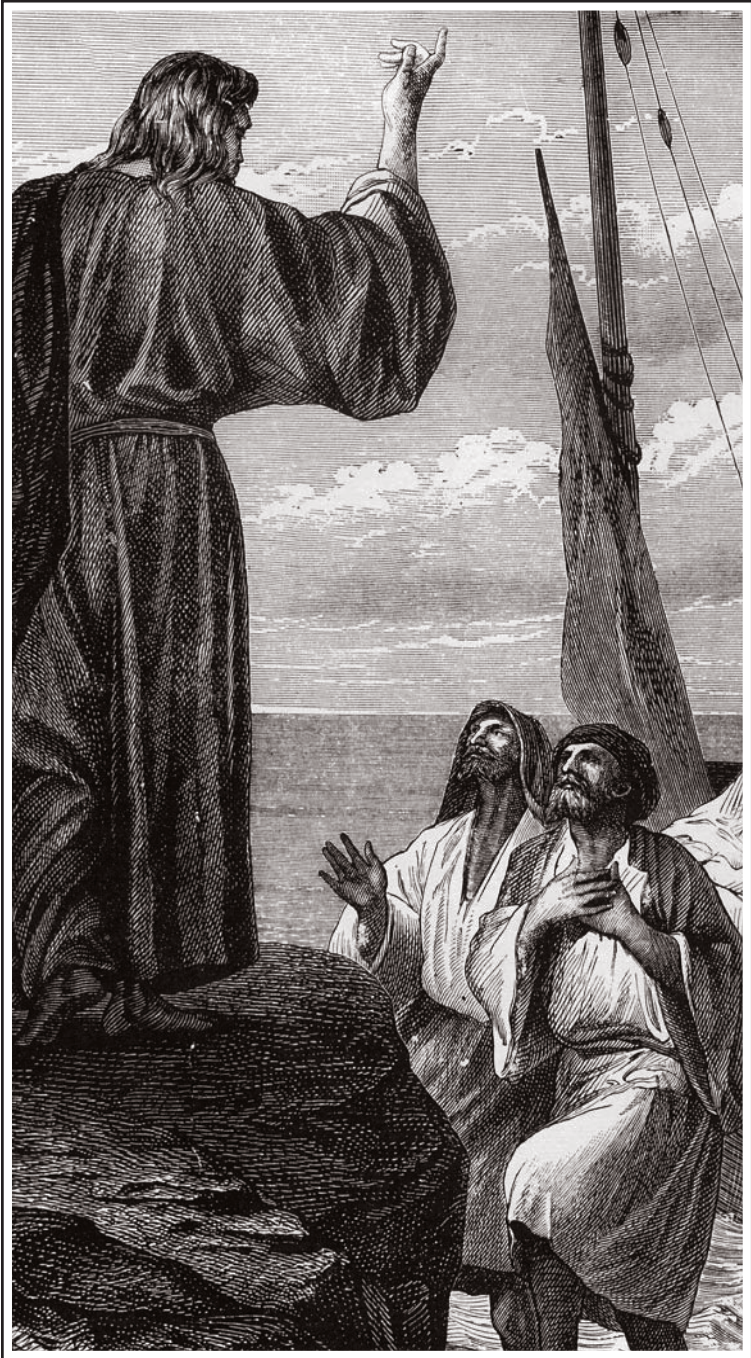
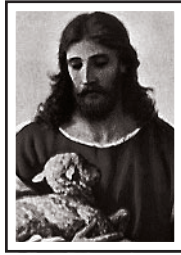


The Twelve Apostles of the Lamb



Chapter Three



The Apostle Peter During Jesus' Ministry

Simon Peter was the brother of the Apostle Andrew and shared a fishing business with him. There is more written about the Apostle Peter than any other Apostle. This is probably because Peter was an excellent picture of how powerful God's holy Spirit is in changing rough, unstable characters into shining Christian examples as stable as a rock!

Peter often acted first and thought second. Even when Jesus came to Peter and Andrew and performed the miracle of the great haul of fish to convince them to leave all and follow him, Peter said, *"Depart from me O Lord for I am a sinful man."* *Luke 5:1-11* This showed Peter's true humility, and yet, at the same time, it showed that Peter thought *he* knew what was best for him to do. But, Jesus lovingly understood Peter and replied, *"Do not fear. From now on you will be fishers of men."*

Shortly after Peter left his fishing business to follow Jesus, Peter experienced another miracle of Jesus. One day, the Lord and his Apostles all assembled in Peter's house. There, the mother of Peter's wife was very sick with a fever: *"And Jesus came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them."* *Mark 1:29-31* Peter's wife would have been most grateful to the Lord for this miracle. It is quite possible that she supported Peter in his decision to follow Jesus, because throughout the Gospels, Peter's house was considered one of hospitality.

The many experiences of Peter with his Lord have provided beautiful lessons to all of Jesus' followers. The love and trust of

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Peter for his Master is told in Matthew 14:22-33. When Jesus called Peter to walk to him on the water, Peter quickly did so. But when the waves became rough, Peter began to sink and he called to the Lord for help. This shows the Christian that when his experiences of life become like rough waves in the ocean, he is to keep focusing straight ahead to Jesus for help and strength, and to trust that Jesus will provide every need. *Phil. 4:19*

Another experience of Peter's life is found in Matthew 16:13-16. One day when Jesus asked his Apostles "*who do you say that I am,*" all but Peter were unsure. Peter answered that Jesus was "*The Christ, [the long promised Messiah, the anointed one] the Son of the living God.*" Jesus used this as a lesson and always loved Peter especially because of this. He changed Peter's name from Simon to Peter. Peter means small stone or rock. He was the only one of the *original* twelve Apostles to have his name changed by Jesus. Jesus then told Peter that upon this rock of truth—that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God*—would lay the foundation for the whole Church. Then Jesus said that Peter would receive the keys to preach the Gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles. Peter did not completely understand what this meant because he didn't have the holy Spirit. But soon he would be the first to deliver the Gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles. *Matt. 16:13-19*

*Note that Jesus here refers to himself as the "*Son of God*" and not as God. There are many wonderful studies in the *Reprints* and the *Studies in the Scriptures* on the relationship of Jesus to his Heavenly Father. Also note that Peter's name was actually changed earlier when Jesus first met Peter. See John 1:42 for this lesson.

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Peter's life brings another lesson to the Christian in Matthew 16:21-23. He was always quick to come to the Master's defense. But before he received the holy Spirit, he did not understand that the Lord had to suffer and die. He told Jesus that he would never allow anyone to hurt him. Jesus then taught him a hard lesson by stating clearly that Peter must not stop the providence of the heavenly Father from taking place. He said to Peter, "*Get thee behind me, Satan.*"

As another lesson to Peter and the Church, Peter was permitted to see something very important—a vision of Jesus, Moses and Elias on the *Mount of Transfiguration*. Peter very quickly said, "*This is wonderful! Let us build three tabernacles—one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elias!*" It was just like Peter to jump ahead of the Lord. Then a voice from Heaven spoke, "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*" God was saying to Peter, "*Be*



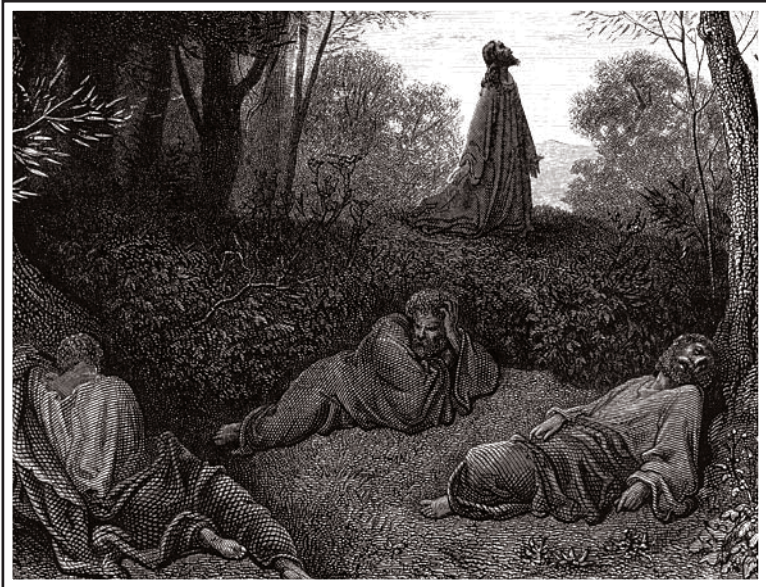
quiet, and listen to Jesus to tell you what you should do." What an important lesson to the Christian. We should look to the Lord for answers before jumping ahead and doing things on our own. *Matt. 9:17:1-5 & Mark 9:2-8*

Further lessons are spoken through Peter's experience in John 13:4-10. Because people walked on dusty roads in open sandals, it was a custom to wash their feet often. Jesus wanted to show a lesson in humility to his Apostles by washing their feet, but Peter said "*Thou shalt never wash my feet.*" Jesus then said, "*If I do not do this, you will have no part with me.*" Peter responded, "*...not my feet only, but also my hands and head!*" Christians learn from this that we

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should be willing to do the humblest of tasks for our brethren. The Apostles missed a great blessing in not washing one another's feet. So, Jesus, their Master, did it for them.

The understanding and sympathy of Jesus for his disciple's fallen and weak flesh is displayed in another lesson to Peter. After the last supper with Jesus, the Apostles went up to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus asked James, Peter and John to watch with him while he went alone to pray. But they were so tired that they fell asleep. Jesus said, "*Could you not stay awake with me for just one hour?*" This happened three times. Then Jesus whispered, "*Sleep on now,*" for he knew that the next day would be a difficult hour of trial for them. *Matt. 26:36-45*



The Apostle Peter was certainly the best character to portray the lesson found in John 18:8-11. When Judas betrayed Jesus, and he brought the multitudes to capture his Lord, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of one of the chief priest's servants. This showed how bold Peter was, but also how wrong it was for a follower of Jesus to have a fighting spirit. Jesus always taught that Christians should be peaceful and should love even when it is difficult. Christians should

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love even their enemies. After Jesus healed the servant's ear, he said, "*They that use the sword against others will die by the sword.*" *Matt. 26:52* Proverbs states that the tongue is sharper than a two-edged sword. A Christian should never "*cut*" with his words, but should be gracious and peaceable with all. *Rom. 12:18*

Probably the most painful lesson to Peter, but one of the most valuable to him and the Church is found in the books of Matthew and Luke. *Luke 22:31-34, 54-62 & Matt. 26:33-35, 57-58, 69-75* Even with all of Peter's boldness, he failed a test of faith by submitting to fear during Jesus' most trying hour. He denied the Lord three times. But Peter regretted his weakness of character in fearing persecution, and he grew from this experience.



The next chapter will show how dramatically Peter changed after receiving the holy Spirit. Even though all of these experiences for Peter during Jesus' ministry were difficult and sometimes very painful, he and other Christians are provided great comfort through them. All should thank the Apostle Peter for his example of faithfulness through the many lessons of his life. It was by these special trials to Peter's faith that he was made strong and became a firm foundation to the Church.