

***The Lives of The Twelve Apostles***

***“Ordinary People Used In Extraordinary Ways”***

**Sermon # 2**

**“Peter: Consistently Inconsistent”**

**John 1:41-42**

Last week we began a series on the lives of the twelve apostles entitled *“Ordinary People Used In Extraordinary Ways.”* In our first study we examined *“Andrew: Bringing Others to Christ.”* Tonight we are going to look at Andrew’s big brother, Peter.

We noted that the disciples had different temperaments and backgrounds, and boy, were they different! They probably would not have been the men that we would have picked if the choosing were up to us.

The following assessment of the apostles by a fictitious Management Consultant firm gives us some insight into just how different they were.

“Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

It is the staff’s opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in back-ground, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew does not have qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, sons of Zebedee, place personal interests above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel it our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaes, and particularly Simon the Zealot have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale. Thaddaeus is definitely sensitive, but he wants to make everyone happy.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Jordan Management Consultants

In our first study (John 1:35-40) we looked at Andrew as he met and spent time with Jesus, his first impulse was to find his brother, and bring him to Jesus. In John 1:41-42 we read, "He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). (42) And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone)."

Simon was a very common name, in fact two of the Twelve are named Simon, Simon Peter and Simon the Zealot. Simon's full name at birth was Simon Bar-Jonah (Matt 16:17) which means "Simon son of Jonah."

Simon Peter was destined to be the Leader of the Twelve, we know this not only because his name is at the head of every list of the Twelve (Matt 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16, Acts 1:13), but we also have the explicit statement of Matthew 10:2, "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother." The word that is translated "first" in this verse is the Greek word (*protos*) which speaks of first in the sense of prominence. But before he could lead he had a lot to learn!

The name Peter was sort of a nickname given to him by Jesus. It literally means "rock" (*petros* is the Greek name for a piece of rock, a stone.) The Aramaic equivalent was Cephas.

But sometimes the Lord still referred to him as Simon, and when he did it almost always signaled that he had done something rash or that he needed rebuking. Jesus wanted the name "Peter" to be a constant reminder of what he could and should be!

John MacArthur tells a story in his book "Twelve Ordinary Men" about Tommy Lasorda, former manager for the Los Angeles Dodgers. He had a young pitcher who was very accurate and had a strong arm, but he wasn't aggressive. Tommy encouraged him to show some grit and determination. He gave him the nickname "Bulldog". Every time he called the young man that he was reminding him to be strong and determined. This pitcher was Orel Hershiser, a pitcher who became known for determination and strength on the pitchers mound. The nickname became a perpetual reminder of what he ought to be, and before long, it shaped his own attitude. [John MacArthur. Twelve Ordinary Men. (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2002) p. 34]

In the same fashion Jesus called Peter, the Rock, even though at times he did not live up to the name. Peter is one who seems to have a bad case of foot in the mouth disease. He's going to say something, it may not be necessary, it may not even make sense, but he's going to talk. But Jesus, saw what Peter could become, not just what he was. He saw his potential. So, over the years Jesus works with him.

Peter must have got to the point that he cringed whenever Jesus called him "Simon" because he knew that he had messed up again. He must have gotten to the point that when he heard Jesus say, "Simon" he would have liked to say to him "Oh, no, please call me Rock." The Lord would have surely replied, "I'll call you Rock when you act like a Rock." For Peter it was process and it is a process for each of us, to move beyond what we are to what Christ would have us to be!

In Matthew 4:18-20, we read of the Lord's call to leave the life of a fisherman to become a "fisher of men". "And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and

Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. (19) Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (20) They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

From the time of his initial call, with Peter it truly seems to be "two steps forward and one step back." No disciple is spoken to by the Lord more often than Peter and no one is rebuked by the Lord more often than Peter. No one confessed the Lord more publicly or boldly than Peter and no one denied the Lord more forcefully or publicly than Peter.

This evening I want us to examine just four snapshots from the life of Peter.

First, Peter's Bold Confession

(Matt 16:13-19)

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (14) So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." (15) He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" (16) Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (17) Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (18) And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (19) And 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."

Peter did not hesitate to declare (v.16) "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the foundational truth of the gospel and the truth upon which His church would be built. When Jesus says in verse eighteen "you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church" he is not talking about building his church based on Peter as the head. He literally says here "*you are Peter (petros – a small stone) and upon this rock (petra – foundational stone) I will build my church.*" It was upon the great foundational belief that Jesus was and is the Son of God stated by Peter that that the Church was built, not Peter himself.

Secondly, Peter's Stumbling Reversal

(Matt 16:21-23)

Perhaps Peter's pride got the better of him because he soon put his foot in his mouth. Jesus began to speak to his disciples about his impending betrayal, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection (Matt 16:21). This was too much for Peter. In Matt 16:22-23 we are told, "Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" (23) But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter has the distinction of being the only disciple to rebuke the Lord. He went from being a blessing and receiving the commendation of Jesus to being a stumbling block and receiving a reprimand in a matter of minutes.

Peter just seems to stumble out of one mess and into another. Does that remind you of anyone?

### Third, Peter's Smug Self-Confidence

(Matt 26:30-35)

Soon Peter's smug self-confidence reasserts itself. In Matt 26:30-35 we read, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (31) Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" (32) But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." (33) Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." (34) Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." (35) Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples."

Of course when the time came and Peter found himself in the courtyard of the High Priest (Matt 26:69-75) he denied Jesus three times just as had been predicted. No sooner than Peter had denied Jesus for the third time the rooster crowed, and as he turned and saw Jesus looking directly at him (Luke 22:61) and Peter remembered the words of the Lord and he "*went out and wept bitterly*" (Matt 26:75).

No doubt Peter is all but destroyed by his denial of the Lord, and he was full of guilt and remorse.

### Fourth, Peter's Forgiveness and Restoration (John 21:15-17)

After the events on Golgotha Peter no doubt felt that he would never be able to hold up his head again. The disciples have gone into Galilee to wait for Jesus to come to them again after the resurrection, but as they waited they grew restless. Peter always a man of action grew tired of the inactivity and so he proposed in the interim to return to his old life of fishing. According to John 21 at least seven of the disciples went on this fishing expedition, but they caught nothing. Then as morning broke and as they were returning tired and frustrated, they saw someone on the shore. Jesus called to them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat, which they did with astonishing results.

In that moment Peter realizing that it was Jesus on shore, as headstrong and impulsive as ever, he jumped over the side and swam and waded to shore. When the other disciples arrived they ate the Breakfast that Jesus had prepared and then Jesus singled Peter out for some private restoration.

In John 21:15-17 we read, "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." (16) He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." (17) He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "*Do you love Me?*" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

There is of course a full length message in this passage alone. Jesus three times asked Peter, *“Simon, do you love me?”* But the English translation of this verse does not let us see that the intensity of what Jesus is asking. He says *“Simon do you love (agape) me?”* That is, Peter do you love me with the God kind of love. Peter replies *“Yes Lord you know I love (phileo) you!”* Peter is saying *“Lord you know I have a deep and abiding affection for you”* but he was unwilling to boast of his love after his last boast and subsequent failure.

A second time Jesus asks, *“Simon do you love (agape) me?”* Peter do you love me with the God kind of love. Peter replies *“Yes Lord you know I love (Phileo) you,” - you know I have a deep and abiding affection for you.”*

So the third time Jesus comes down to Peter's level and asks, *“Simon do you love (phileo) me – with a deep and abiding affection?”* Peter replies *“Yes Lord you know I love (Phileo) you with a deep and abiding affection.”* Jesus tells him, *“Then feed my sheep, Peter, I called you out of the fishing business years ago. You are to be a shepherd – pastor my flock.”*

Jesus thus restored Peter to his rightful calling as a fisher of men and as a under shepherd of his sheep.

Shepherd of Souls (Acts 2:14-41)

After the Holy Spirit had come upon the disciples, and they received the power that had been promised them by Jesus, they left the upper room where they had been waiting. When they came into the street the people began to question them about what was happening. Simon empowered by the Holy Spirit began to speak to the crowd – with passion, with persuasion and with power. Simon now shows that he had indeed become “the Rock” and he became to speak boldly of the death and resurrection of Jesus. As a result of his preaching three thousand people were saved that day (Acts 2:41).

As Peter learned from his mistakes his character was transformed and he became the man Christ wanted him to be – he gradually changed from Simon into Peter - the Rock.

Conclusion

How did Peter life end? We know that Jesus told him that he would die a martyr (John 21:18-19). But Scripture does not record the death of Peter. Church history tells us however, that Peter was crucified, upside down. Peter when told he was to be crucified said that he was unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord and requested to be crucified upside down.