

When Simon became Peter: Lord of your life?

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Lord of Your Life?

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8 KJV)

Did you know, that before Peter ever arrived at this moment, he was one who had walked with the Lord, seen Him perform mighty works, and had even hosted Jesus in his own home not far from the synagogue in Capernaum? Then why was it here, in this moment, in his own commercial fishing boat, that we see Peter shockingly confronted with such an unfamiliar vision of the Lord that it causes him see himself so clearly?

Peter begins to follow Jesus

In their first-century world, we cannot speculate with certainty on just what prior knowledge Peter may have had about Jesus before the ministry of John the Baptist. However, as we identify the relationships between so many of those surrounding Jesus during his ministry, while also acknowledging the various Jewish customs that would have been observed over the course of each year, we might chance to wonder at the times their paths could have crossed, or how they may have heard the names of one another being mentioned in various company over the course of ordinary life as news was passed around within the Galilean community. But, we must go to the Gospel of John to find what we can say with all confidence is the earliest of any such encounter between them left to our record.

On a certain day near the end of his mission to prepare the hearts of the people for the Christ, John the Baptist said to two of his disciples about Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36 KJV). These same disciples were invited by Jesus at about 4 p.m. that same day to come to the place where He was staying. One of the two named Andrew, convinced they had found the Messiah foretold from Scriptures hundreds of years before, found his brother

Simon and brought him to see the Lord. It was in this moment that Jesus gave Simon a nickname.

And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. (John 1:42b KJV)

“Cephas,” a word meaning stone in the Aramaic language, is the same as “Peter” when taken from the Greek language into English. And Peter is the name we know so well.

The very next day, Jesus invited another disciple, Philip, to follow him (John 1:43). So, we can only assume that it is from these times that Peter begins to learn from Jesus, and to witness the extraordinary signs that will accompany His message. But, we should carefully note, it is not from this time that Peter leaves all and follows Jesus exclusively, for we find him after this encounter working at various times in his business of fishing.

A rock that isn't a rock

One Sabbath day, Jesus went to Peter's home after teaching the people, and healing a possessed man in the synagogue of Capernaum (Luke 4:31ff). Peter's mother-in-law was there sick with a high fever, but Jesus immediately healed her. Later that night, He continued healing many more that were brought to Peter's house for that very reason.

Some days after this occasion, Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people who wanted to hear what He had to say. This took place beside a lake on which Peter (along with his business partners Andrew, James, and John) had been working overnight. Though the men had worked hard all night, they had caught nothing. Jesus took this opportunity to get into Peter's boat and teach the people that were on the shore. Afterwards, He told him, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” (John 5:4b ESV) Now, Peter knew at least two things that must have come to mind: 1) fishermen did their work at night, because they used nets that could be seen by fish in the daytime, and 2) Peter and his partners made a living at this precisely because they knew how to find success and had been unable to do so, though they had tried all night long. In spite of this, Peter follows the instructions that Jesus gives him and is rewarded with a catch so large that the nets almost failed and the boats almost sank beneath it (Luke 5:6,7).

The Bible sometimes gives us clues by using names for people which have certain meanings, and leading up to this moment, when Luke writes, he calls this man Simon. In fact, he only uses the name Simon to refer to him before our verse in 5:8. It is “Simon's house” (4:38), “Simon's mother-in-law” (4:38), and Simon's boat (5:3). It is Simon the Lord tells to let down his nets (5:4), and it was Simon who gave the reply that he would do so (5:5), even though he couldn't see what good it would do. But, here, in this moment, facing such a catch that he had never witnessed before, it is here that Luke doesn't call the man Simon, but Simon Peter (5:8). Why? Because it is here that he first begins to be the “rock” that would eventually preach the Gospel with wholehearted conviction.

What was it about being out on that lake with Jesus that caused Peter to recognize something in the Lord and something in himself he had never understood before? Peter had heard first-hand the powerful teaching of Jesus which left many in wonder and amazement (4:32). He had witnessed the miracles of healing being performed by Jesus in his own home. What was different about this miracle in his own boat? It must be that, in this act, Jesus proved to Peter that it was He who is Lord over all – yes, even, and maybe especially at times, Lord over those things which we hold dear and believe most to be within our own power and control. The haul of fish was surely extraordinary, and a fisherman by trade was equipped to recognize that better than anyone else. But, aware as Peter already was of the mighty

miracles being done by Jesus, was it the fact that it simply took one more miracle to finally break through to Peter's heart? Or, is it better understood that the reason it touched him so personally was because that particular divine work proved to Peter that it is Jesus who holds complete Lordship over even those things which are so well known to us — the things that we too often rely on for our sense of identity, comfort, and safety.

Lord of all?

When Peter finally did see Jesus for who He was, it was then that Peter realized just how far short he fell as a reflection of the Lord. He had been so close to Him, knew Him, heard His voice and teaching, and even believed in Him. Yet, Peter had never recognized Him for who He truly is, or given Him what He deserved in worship.

Maybe you too have listened to the teachings of Jesus. Have you believed in Him? Have you, like Peter, drawn near to follow Him? Have you perhaps even, like Peter, failed to truly recognize Him despite these things? All of us should consider the Lordship of Jesus and His place in our life.

Is He *truly* Lord of your life?

And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” (Luke 5:10 ESV)