

The Man Christ FORMED to be a Rock: The Preparation, Fall, and Restoration of Peter

Introduction of the Disciples to Jesus

Lesson 1

- I. The Disciples' Introduction to Jesus (John 1:20-51)
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Introduction: Imagine the opportunity to walk with some of the faithful followers of God from centuries past! Though we have the privilege to associate and minister with some of God's choice servants in our lifetimes, we also have the thrilling opportunity to revisit the lives of many mature saints and retrace the steps of their earthly pilgrimage. The following statement (adapted from a set of memoirs put out by the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland) accentuates the value of biographical study of historical Christians.

The lives [biographical studies] of eminent saints, wherein are represented their experiences of the divine all-sufficiency, goodness, condescension, and immutable fidelity; their attainments in a holy and heavenly frame of

heart and conversation, and their extensive usefulness in the various spheres to which Providence had assigned them, have been justly accounted amongst the most agreeable productions of the press. They bestow pleasure and profit, amusement and edification, at once: while the reader diverts his curiosity with the historical incidents, his mind is insensibly led into an high esteem, and emulation of that goodness by which the subject of the piece was distinguished; they set the truth and power of religion in a strong and affecting light, and may not, without reason, be regarded as additional credentials, whereby the excellency of the religion of Christ is attested and recommended anew. In them we behold what the wisest of men could not think of without astonishment, "That God does in very deed dwell with men on the earth;" nay more, dealeth familiarly with them, while He makes them previously acquainted with His secret designs both of judgment and mercy, and displays His divine power, and the efficacy of His grace, through their infirmities, subduing and conquering the most hardened obstinate sinners to Himself; and while He, as it were, resigns Himself to the command of their prayers, and makes them the subject of the angelic care and superintendence. Thus also the lives of the saints are perpetuated on earth, and these stars which once shone in our hemisphere, though now translated to the regions of glory, yet continue their benign influence upon us (*Memoirs of Veitch, Hog, Erskine, and Carstairs*, 65-66).

What is true of historical biography is even more so true with Bible biography. Historical biography is given by God to us *for* our inspiration and encouragement. The lives of Bible characters have been given to us *by* inspiration for our imitation and admonition.

The Scriptures afford us with worthy examples (i.e., Joseph, Daniel, and Paul) whose names are never once sullied with the stain of sin, though we, of course, know they were

imperfect people used mightily of God. There are unworthy examples (Cain, Korah, Saul, Balaam, and Judas) whose lives elicit sobering warnings about the dangers of jealousy, covetousness, and sinning against spiritual privilege and revelation. But another class of Bible characters still awaits us, and it is to this class that we most easily relate and lavish our affection. It is those characters whose lives are full of contradictions, of stumblings and victories, of fallings and risings, of regress and progress. In the Old Testament, the most notable example of this realistic—and refreshing—variety is David. The David-like character of the New Testament is Simon Peter, a man whose very name embodies the state of his soul.

In Peter's first personal encounter with the Lord, Jesus took a moment to look at him searchingly (John 1:42, the same word only appears once more in John [1:36]), and then very deliberately identified what the aim of His relationship with Peter would be.

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him [looked him over; considered him]; and said, *You are Simon* [Greek form of Simeon; from root meaning "to hear"] *the son of John; you shall be called Cephas* [/kay' fus/] (which is translated Peter).

In essence, Jesus condensed all of Peter's life into the name by which he was known. He said to him, "You are Simon. You are named after one of the tribes of Judah. Your father's name is John, you are a fisherman, your partners are James and John, you have a wife, and your mother-in-law lives with you; BUT you will come to be known in a different way, as Cephas" [Aramaic for "rock"; "Peter" is the Greek word]. All the loose stones of Peter's life would be reworked and molded until—through his contact with Christ—he would become a rock. Combining the meaning of both of his names provides the testimony of his life—What he would hear from Christ would settle into his soul and firm him up for the Lord. Peter would be known as the man the

Lord made to be a rock. The language is reminiscent of that which God had spoken to Abraham (Genesis 17:5, *No longer shall your name be called Abram [exalted father], but your name shall be Abraham [father of a multitude]*); and to Jacob (Gen. 32:28, *Your name shall no longer be Jacob [supplanter], but Israel [prince or conqueror with God]*).

In designating him [Peter] by this new name, Jesus takes possession of him and consecrates him, with all his natural qualities, to the work which He is going to entrust to him (F. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 2 vols., 1:329).

Before studying some of the specific incidents in Peter's life that were formative in His transformation, we will take a general survey both of Christ's choosing of the Twelve disciples and of the disciples themselves in order to see how Christ met and called the men with whom Peter served.

I. The Disciples' Introduction to Jesus (John 1:20-51)

Four lists of the twelve disciples appear in the Bible (Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16, Acts 1:13). The list in Acts, of course, would exclude Judas.

The Bible does not record the introduction of every one of the Twelve to Jesus. In fact, the initial encounters of only seven disciples are recorded. John 1 records five of those seven. The other two are Matthew (Matthew 9:9) and James (Matthew 4:21).

A simple observation is worth noting here. Nobody follows Christ who is not first introduced to Him. These five accounts record four ways that the disciples were introduced to Christ and replicate ways in which people are often introduced to Christ today.

A. Introduced Through the Ministry of a Preacher (John 1:29-34)

John had baptized Jesus and made the declaration that he had seen God's Lamb that would take away the sin of the world. In fulfillment of the purpose of his ministry as one who was to come before Christ to prepare the way, John not only wanted to point the crowds that had been following him for many months to Christ, but he specifically wanted to point his closest disciples to Him. Therefore, when Jesus approached John to be baptized, John added new information to his stirring message, *Behold the Lamb of God!* (1:29). Again, on the day following Jesus' baptism (v. 34), John gazed on Jesus with the same penetrating insight with which Jesus would later gaze on Peter (1:42). John's insight into who Jesus was prompted another spontaneous testimony to Jesus' identity (*Behold, the Lamb of God*, 1:36). John's role as the primary forerunner of Christ, sent to urge others to *make straight the way of the Lord* (1:23), implied that the Lord was on His way. The people needed to be ready to give Him a glad reception, and John repeatedly urged them to do so.

John not only identified Jesus as the Lamb of God in John 1:29, but he also declared that Jesus was the answer to a nagging question likely raised by John's own ministry—the question of full forgiveness from one's sins. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance (signifying a changing of mind, a receptiveness of his message); however, it did not address the peoples' past sins, focusing instead on changed behavior for the future. John attached Jesus' identity with His purpose for coming. John's clear testimony to Jesus' identity directed the attention of Andrew and John (most likely) to seek the Lord (1:37) and to then spend nearly a full day with Him.

B. Introduced Through a Family Member (John 1:40-41)

After a day with the Lord, Andrew insists that Simon, his brother, meet the Messiah. Andrew is the disciple whom John depicts as always bringing someone to the Lord (John 1:40-41 [Peter]; 6:8-9 [boy with loaves and fish]; 12:20-22 [Greeks]). Perhaps Andrew's legacy for believers is a willingness to recognize that the best thing we can do to minister most effectively to people is to steer them to Christ. Should they meet with Christ, He can address their true needs.

C. Introduced Through a Friend (John 1:45-46)

Philip, from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter, introduces the Lord to His friend Nathaniel. Though the word *found* can either communicate a finding after a careful search or by accident, it seems clear that Philip left the Lord's presence eager to return with someone. Finding Nathaniel, Philip urges Nathaniel past his hesitation and budding doubt (*Come and see*).

D. Sought by Christ Himself (John 1:43-44)

Though the Lord often uses people to do His work, sometimes He simply breaks into a situation and does the work Himself. The word *found* is the same word as is in 1:45. Jesus' reason for going to Galilee is for the express purpose of finding Philip. Jesus wanted this man to follow Him. This is similar to what the Lord did later with Matthew (Matthew 9:9).

II. Christ's Commissioning of the Twelve as Apostles
(Luke 6:12; Mark 3:14)

A. Jesus' Preparation for the Commissioning

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12, NASB).

The night prior to His choice of the apostolic company, Jesus spent a night in prayer. The content of His prayer is not recorded here, but we are later given a window into the personal burdens that He carried for His disciples (John 17:6-26). He clearly understood that the choosing of the disciples originated with the Father (*whom You gave Me*, John 17:6). In his extended prayer, He was praying for the Father's will to be done in the lives of the Father's choices. These men came out of the world and belonged to Him (17:6). Jesus would have the responsibility to teach them the Father's word, including how to obey it and how to understand it correctly. He was burdened that the disciples would continually receive His words with belief—the word of truth (17:8), that they would be preserved (17:11) and sanctified (17:17) that they would display oneness together and oneness with Him (17:21-22); and that they would have eternal communion with Him (17:24).

B. Providential Timing of the Commissioning

Christ's commissioning of the Twelve does not take place upon their first introduction to Him, but comes at a point in time probably about 1—1 ½ years after He had known them. Initially, it appears that the disciples traveled with the Lord occasionally. Luke gives us the timing of the Lord's calling them to a more regular ministry (6:12, *at this time*). *This time* was full of a mounting opposition to the Lord's increasingly confrontational ministry. Notice the chronology:

Luke 5:1-11 Miraculous catch and Peter's response

Luke 5:12-15 Leper healed for a testimony to priests
Luke 5:17-26 Jesus' authority to forgive (healing of man let down through the roof)
Luke 5:27-32 Call of Levi (Matthew)
Luke 5:33-39 Jesus confronts the Pharisees' tradition
John 5:1-47 Sabbath healing of paralytic at Pool of Bethesda (inception of rejection; cf. 5:16, 18 discussion begins of ways to kill Him)
Luke 6:1-5 Sabbath controversy over grain
Luke 6:6-11 Sabbath healing of man with withered hand
Luke 6:12-16 Commissioning of the Twelve

The Pharisees felt that Jesus blasphemed when He forgave the man with the palsied hand. They complained and criticized when he chose Matthew as a disciple and dined in Matthew's house with sinners and tax collectors. They criticized Jesus when they observed that Jesus' disciples did not fast as John's did. They plotted His death over the Sabbath healing of the man by the pool of Bethesda; they argued with Him over the plucking of grain on the Sabbath and contended with Him over His healing of the man with the withered hand—and it was *at this time* that the disciples' commissioning occurred.

Jesus did not lavish His ministry on those who did not receive it. Over a period of time Jesus had been teaching multitudes that followed Him, but from this point on, He will concentrate on those who had been follower-learners. He purposefully is limiting His ministry to those who had listened to His words attentively.

In fact, Jesus now frequently speaks to the multitudes in parables (Matthew 13). He did so in context of their unbelief and misunderstanding.

The *occasion*, demanding the choice of the Twelve and the organization of the kingdom work in a more compact way, arose from various circumstances. The enemies of Jesus had been organizing the forces opposing His ministry for some time already. This called for the definite organization of His followers to resist the shocks of this ever-growing antagonism. More fundamental still, the increasing work in the growing kingdom demanded a more complete organization of its working forces, looking to thoroughness and a complete work. Growing out of this was the need of thorough training for His workers. They were to be with Him at all times and in all places, companions in His travels, witnesses of all His work, students of His doctrines, fellow-laborers in His practical school of experience, and finally to become in reality as now in name, commissioned apostles of His world-wide campaign for the establishment of the kingdom. For the time, they were learning by daily companionship with the Master what they should be, do, believe, and teach, as His witnesses and ambassadors. From this time on their training would occupy a large part of the time and attention of their Teacher (Thomas Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels*, 169, original emphasis).

C. Teaching Accompanying Commissioning (What did Jesus teach them to teach?)

In the scene following the choosing of the disciples (Luke 6:17ff), the substance of what Christ taught the disciples was the essence of kingdom living. Luke 6 records what is probably another occasion on which Jesus reiterated the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. He probably repeated these truths on many occasions.

There is no more definitive statement in the Bible about what it means to be ruled by Christ than the way Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount. He began with the Beatitudes. Christ taught that living under His rule would bring followers into constant conflict with the kingdom of this world. Citizens submitted to Christ are evient by their character (now using Matthew's order):

poor in spirit or spiritual destitution before God
those who mourn or sorrowfully repentant
gentle or God-controlled; submissive to His higher authority
hunger and thirst for righteousness or possess an involuntary craving to do what the rest of the world is resisting
merciful or truly compassionate
pure in heart or sincere, without guile or duplicity; do not exploit misery, but build up
peacemakers or those seeking to bring others into right relationship with God

One would think that a person displaying such character would be welcome in the world, but alas, he typically is persecuted. The last of the Beatitudes reads: *Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:10). Since it would be hard to accept this unexpected response, Jesus adds an application of it: *Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.* (Matthew 5:11, NASB).

The truth about following Christ is that when a man is being formed by the Master's hand, he ends up in the same circumstance as the Master. He becomes like his Master, and he endures what His master endures.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:12, NASB).

D. Purposes for the Commissioning (Mark 3:14-15)

We have observed that Jesus chose the disciples at the will of the Father, but why were they chosen at this time?

¹⁴And He appointed [chose with hands] twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out [apostello] to preach, ¹⁵and to have authority to cast out the demons (NASB).

1. *That they would be with Him*

Jesus desired them to be with Him, not for the sake of His need for fellowship, but for their need of Him. Their being in His company was a time of personal preparation for them; their own needs were going to be revealed through their constant companionship with one who had a perfect life.

There is a danger for those who are called to serve the Lord with all of their time and are then set aside by other believers for the work of the ministry. A man can lose Jesus Christ in his study of the Word. Being in Christ's company put the disciples in a place of privilege where their needs could be addressed, but it also put them in a place of danger. They could grow familiar and casual with divine things. We must be wary of burrowing into the letters of the Word and failing to soak up the spirit of it.

2. *That He could send them out to preach*

Christ desired that the disciples would be with Him so He could prepare them for a specific task—preaching. He wanted His disciples to be effective communicators of the truths of the Gospel He had

taught them about Himself, and they needed to communicate those truths accurately with their lives and with their words.

Christ's method with the Twelve is instructive for us. He prepares His disciples for specific works, and He always prepares them *before* He sends them. Often we tend to get impatient when a role, ministry, or other desirable opportunity does not come our way—especially when we think we are ready for it. However, we are not to get impatient with God. He is masterfully directing the steps of our lives, and He will make no mistakes.

Conclusion: Since the moment of the disciples' introduction to Christ, we see that Christ funneled His ministry to them toward a particular objective. He aimed for them to be much different men than the ones He had found, and more so with Peter than any other disciple, we see the maturation process take place. From his initial introduction to Christ, we have the privilege of observing some of Peter's most intimate struggles. We observe his thrilling victories and sobering defeats at close range; however, through his many months with the Lord we see Christ weave events together to construct a mold by which He forms Peter into the rock He intended him to be. Peter became the most significant figure in the earliest years of the founding and building of the body of Christ.

In the coming weeks, we will study various aspects of Peter's life during these formative days. We will hear what he says and watch what he does. Through it all we will have the joy of seeing the Lord fashion a most fallible man into a most useful tool in the work of the Lord.