

St. Peter

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[0 : 00] Okay, well, is this good? I like the introduction because the Apostle Peter, like the way I speak apparently, was also clear, simple, and no nonsense.

That sort of describes Peter in a lot of ways. And I was asked to do Peter, not because I'm writing a book on him, or because I have any inside information on Peter, or that I've done a lot of study on Peter.

None of those things are true. It's because today, January 18th, is the feast day for the confession of St. Peter. And we're actually going to read a collect from that feast day at the end, which is a great collect.

And this was in Protestant churches, this feast, because emphasizing the importance of Peter's confession, Peter's testimony, and it actually emphasizes the message of Jesus Christ.

And so this is why it's a good day for me to talk about the Apostle Peter. I've gotten to know Peter over the last couple weeks very well, and it has been a good exercise.

[1 : 13] So thank you, Alexander, for assigning me this person. He is a wonderful person, and you can certainly ask questions during the talk that I have, clarification or things that come to mind.

And I'll also have a little time of question and answer afterwards. And I'm assuming we sort of end around 10-15, is that right?

Okay. All right. Very good. Hi, Isabel. I want to start out right from the beginning with Peter.

Peter. He was born in a place called Bethsaida. Now, has anyone been to the Holy Land before, to Israel? Raise your hand if you have been there.

Wow. This is about half of our group. So I have a few slides on my PowerPoint, and you probably have better slides on your computers.

[2 : 14] I got these off the Internet, but I think it's very helpful for us to see the places where Peter was. And to put him in the historical context that he was. So I want to just start by saying that he was born here in a place called Bethsaida.

And there's the Sea of Galilee, so he obviously grew up within sight of the Sea of Galilee. And he knew all about the fishing industry, probably from birth.

I mean, he would have, this was the prominent industry in that area. And then he moved to Capernaum, where he had his home. And there's a picture of the Bethsaida plain.

So there's the north end of the Sea of Galilee. And it's in here that he grew up as a little boy. And, you know, obviously it's a beautiful sight. Fishing boats would have been just the staple of his life.

He would have seen. And he lived, he moved then, as I said, to a place called Capernaum. And this is what Capernaum looks like today.

[3 : 25] This is the ruins of a fourth century synagogue here. And you can see that here are the ruins of a number of buildings that have been excavated, residential homes.

This is on top of a much older synagogue that he would have known from the first century that they put this synagogue here. But this is the traditional place where Peter's house was.

It's a very nice house, isn't it? But what they've done is the Roman Catholic Church has built a church, the octagonal church. And there has been an octagonal church there, eight sides, since about the fifth century.

And in 1990, they built this other church over it. And you can look down through the glass floor of the church and see the ruins of where Peter's house traditionally would have been.

Now, it was very early on that that house was changed and added onto, sort of in the fourth century, because of the fact, no, it was earlier than that, because of the fact that people came to see that as Peter's home.

[4 : 33] And it very well could have been. I mean, obviously, we don't know for sure. I'll do a little close-up of the church. You see how they built it right over the ruins of the town. But it's a town of about 1,500.

So it wasn't very large. It was a fishing community. And I'm going to talk about a place called Pender Harbor as part of my talk, because has anyone ever been to Pender Harbor?

Pender Harbor is about that size, a little bit bigger, about 2,000. It's a fishing community. And obviously, in the summer, it's much, much larger. It's five times as big. But the year-round community is similar to this.

And it has a fishing industry, too. And I'm going to talk about that in a moment. And there's another picture of where Peter's house was before they built the church.

So they had a church in an octagonal form. And underneath that, you can see the foundation of a house much earlier on that could have been Peter's house. Now, Peter was married.

[5 : 37] And we know that from 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul says, Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas, who was Peter?

So Peter was married. He had a family here. He was probably fairly well off to have a home like he did, as described in the Bible.

And there was a group of private homes built around near the synagogue. And they were the larger homes as well. His profession, as I said, was commercial fishing.

And that was very like the boat that he owned. And it sounds like he had actually a couple of boats in the partnership that he had. So it was a little bit of a conglomerate of fishing boats.

How do we know that boat looked like that? That is a fishing boat that was discovered in 1986. How many people have seen that boat?

[6 : 47] It's in a museum near the Sea of Galilee. This boat was discovered in 1986 because it was a particularly dry year in the Sea of Galilee. Very, very low water.

And they came across some of the pieces of this boat and careful excavation. found a very well-preserved fishing boat in the mud.

And they obviously very carefully excavated it. It's a temperature-controlled museum. It holds up to 15 men. It's about 26 feet long and about 7 feet wide, beam to beam.

It's about 4 1/2 feet from the waterline as well. Now, they did carbon dating on it. And it's right around the first century, between 30 BC and 100 AD.

So right in the middle of that is when Peter lived. So that was a boat very similar to what Peter had as a fisherman. And if you're in Israel, you can go see that.

[7 : 55] And interestingly, that boat was built of reused timbers. So they weren't the original timbers. Somebody needed to do it, sort of get a used boat.

I want to say a word about this industry that Peter was part of. Do you know the, what is sort of the, well, the stereotype or the reputation that Peter and the fishermen had?

Have you heard of, sort of, in your reading or conversations, what were fishermen like in the first century? Rough.

Rough. Tough. Poorly educated, which is a big one. And we get that from Acts 4, where the chief priests are surprised, because these are uneducated men, that they would know the scriptures so well and understand how the Messiah came out of it.

Yes. So uneducated, rough, tough, uncouth. And a bit ignorant as well. That's the reputation. But in fact, it's probably something quite a bit different from that.

[9 : 12] You know that Jewish children, until the age of 12, or by the age of 12, needed to be able to memorize the Pentateuch. So they were homeschooled in a way that our children might have a little difficulty with.

A very high, very, very high regard for education, and especially understanding the Bible, being able to read, and to be able to memorize, and so forth. The other thing about the fishermen, especially Peter, is that he was running a business, an international business.

Dried fish was a very important trade in the Middle East, in Palestine. He would have had to be able to be in contact with a variety of different people, Gentiles and Jews, and to be able to run a good business.

And he had partners as well. Do you remember who his partners were in fishing? James and John. James and John. And probably his brother Andrew was helping out as well.

So you got at least four people running the thing, and they probably had deckhands as well. So they can have about 15 people there. Now, I ministered in Pender Harbor for eight years.

[10:27] And interestingly enough, the fishing families who owned these big boats that went fishing for herring and row and kelp, they were huge businesses.

They were international businesses these guys had, multi-million dollar businesses. And they would have licenses, fishing licenses, that cost several hundred thousand dollars. And they would hire deckhands.

And they would hire people for sort of \$40,000 or \$50,000 per season for only a couple months. And it was similar to this in that they each would have had around 10 to 15 people that could work for them during that season.

They had to know, in Pender Harbor, they had to know all the international markets. They had to know what was happening politically. They had to be very, very, very good businessmen because of the ups and downs each year.

And I believe that there were a lot of similar issues that these fishermen in Galilee had to deal with as well, if you were a boat owner. Because you were hiring people to work for you.

[11:36] You had to know the international markets. You had to be a very canny business person to survive because every year would be different. So Peter clearly was a good leader.

He was a very good communicator as well. And he was well-educated in the market. And he would have known Greek, Koine Greek being the language of commerce, as English is today.

So my belief is, and I've done some reading on this as well, and I did interestingly when I was in Pender Harbor, that the reputation of Peter that is very common in commentaries is actually probably wrong.

He was rough around the edges, there's no doubt about it. But he was a very educated, strong leader and communicator as well.

And if you go to Sea of Galilee today, you can still buy fish and chips. And this is the fish that Peter would have caught. It's called St. Peter's fish.

[12:41] It was tilapia. But this is the kind of fish that Peter caught. And the industry still continues today. Okay. That doesn't look too bad, I guess.

And I think I might order it. So there's a little bit of a background about Peter's life before Jesus. That's his life before Jesus. Any questions about that? It's my introduction to Peter. Why an opazional church?

Why are there eight sides to that church? I don't know. Does anybody know why that is? I'm not sure why it was. So everybody will say they were opazional church?

I guess. But it was way, way back that they built it. That they built it, that eight sides. It was in the fourth century that they built it. Yeah. On the top of my head, I've got a guess. One and two, Peter mentioned the number eight.

[13:43] He said, he thinks the number eight, on the eighth day is the impossible day. Right. God's new day. Right. Could be. Eight people were saved.

They didn't know it's blood. Yes. Peter said. Yes. He thinks that's meaningful. That's a guess. That's very good. That's the best guess that I can think of. And so if you find another, if you find any other information, email me about why there are eight sides.

Yes. I mean, all of these could be. Yeah. The thing is, we probably won't know for sure, but that's a good guess. So, so in that situation that Peter finds himself in, that milieu, a very hardworking, busy life that he has.

Andrew, who is a brother of Peter and a disciple of John the Baptist, we're going to hear about this today, by the way, in the sermon. John has just pointed Andrew to Jesus, who is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

It was an extraordinary thing to say, the Lamb of God, that the Messiah is one who will be sacrificed in the place of Israel. And for the forgiveness of sins.

[15:10] It was a shocking thing to hear. And Andrew hears that, and he goes to his brother, Simon. And, and he says to him, we have found the Messiah.

And Andrew brings Peter to Jesus. And, and what happens is that Jesus speaks to him and says, you are Simon, son of Jonas, but you shall be called Cephas.

And you know what Cephas means, right? It means rock. So, so his nickname was Rocky. And Jesus said, this is, this is what you're going to be. Now, this is very significant to what his life would

be about as well.

Your name's going to be Cephas. You wonder what Peter was thinking when Jesus said that to him. Now, the Bible doesn't tell us that Peter started following Jesus right away.

That's the initial, that's the introduction to Jesus. But it's later on, because he and his fellow disciples, he, Peter looked on Jesus as a teacher.

[16:13] But Jesus had not commanded them to follow him yet. The second call was received on the Sea of Galilee. And the four partners are fishing. You remember this.

People wanted to hear Jesus. So he got into Peter's boat, requested that they get a little out from land. And they did. And he addresses the multitude. And then you remember the story of how there is this miraculous catch of fish, which would have been talked about all over Galilee once that happened, because they weren't catching anything.

There's this great catch, because Jesus commands them to throw their nets. And they pull their boats up on the shore, and they leave everything to follow Jesus. Jesus says, follow me.

And by the way, Mark, you know the Gospel of Mark? Who wrote the Gospel of Mark? Do you know who wrote it? Mark did. Let's see if you're awake.

But who was passing all the information to Mark? It was Peter. Peter. And the evidence is very good on this. And Peter writes, and he remembers Jesus, that they are casting nets into the sea.

[17:27] And Jesus says to them, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And there is this immediate leaving of their nets. It's as though they caught this vision that Jesus was giving them of being fishers of men immediately.

And obviously, this completely transforms their life. And the catch that they had had is probably a symbol. It's Jesus showing them there will be great fruit in this work that you will have of being fishers of men.

And certainly, we're going to see this in Peter's life in an extraordinary way. This extraordinary harvest of people who will follow Jesus as they have as well.

Now, Peter, once he starts following Jesus, and I have a couple of paintings, just two painters, actually.

But they're painters that I like. This is the calling of Peter. And this is obviously, this is a life-changing experience that happens for Peter.

[18:38] And what we see in Peter is remarkable, his life has a remarkable change that happens over a long period of time.

And so we don't see Peter immediately become a super apostle. He doesn't immediately become somebody who is endowed by these incredible gifts by God.

And he goes forward from strength to strength. He doesn't go forward from strength to strength, does he? I mean, this is a roller coaster ride. If I think of Peter's life, I think of a roller coaster.

There are deep points and there are high points. But it's all pretty exhilarating as he's going through. And it starts here, and it doesn't let up.

Peter becomes really the leader of the apostles. He's the spokesperson. You know, he's the one who always says to Jesus, you know, explain the parable to us. How many times should I forgive my brother?

[19:43] And he's saying what everybody else is thinking, right? And so Peter is speaking often for the disciples themselves.

He's a real leader. And we know that he was one of the inner circle as well with James and with John. But there's a key moment which has to do with today.

And it takes place here. How many people have been to Caesarea Philippi before? Okay. So what is this? Have you been there?

Yeah. It's a massive, and it's a massive rock. Caesarea Philippi is just to the north. It's about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

And there's a very large mountain, Mount Hermon, which has snow on it. You know, it's the size of Mount Baker. And these are, this is the foothills starting up, going towards the mountain.

[20:46] And it's very likely that Jesus was right near here and looking at that rock face, which is very imposing. It's impressive. And it's beautiful.

There's water coming out of here as well. And I want to read what happens here. Jesus asks this question. He says, who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they say, you know, some say John the Baptist.

Some say Elijah. Some say that he's Jeremiah or one of the prophets. And, you know, Jesus' question to them is, well, who do you say that I am? And Simon Peter, again, is the spokesperson. You know, he jumps in and he says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now, that's an extraordinary thing to say to somebody.

It is saying that it is the confession that when it was gladly believed in the heart and confessed with the mouth is what made the church.

[21 : 46] This is what created the church. That confession that he said that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Well, this is a high point, really, in Peter's life.

It is an extraordinary gift that's given to him, as Jesus said. He said, blessed are you, Simon, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is at, but my Father who is in heaven.

So he's saying that this is a revelation. This is something that God the Father actually told Peter. It wasn't just something that he sort of had figured out on his own or had sort of, but the Father had revealed it to him.

And that confession was the confession of the church, and it is our confession today as well. It's an eternal confession that he's saying. And Jesus says to Peter, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And then he told his disciples not to tell anybody that he was the Christ.

[23 : 05] Well, more ink has been spilled on that passage than anywhere else in the gospel. Those eight verses. And it's obviously something that has been of great concern and interest to the church.

It's something that is very, very important for us as well. But we have two different ideas, don't we, in Christendom.

We have the Roman Catholic Church that sees that, that this is the commission of the Pope, the first Pope. Whereas the Greek, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Reformed Church Protestants would understand that passage in a way that the Greek really lends itself to as well. Where Jesus says, you are Peter, and he calls him Petros, which means a small stone. But when he says, upon this rock I will build my church, the Greek term for rock is Petro, which means bedrock.

You know, which is what you see here. And the bedrock, of course, is Jesus Christ. It is that confession of Peter. And so what Peter has done with Jesus here, in that confession, is that, is something wrong?

[24 : 22] Okay. There we go. There we go. So what Peter has done is he's pointed, he has pointed all of us, he has pointed all of us to Christ.

He's saying that this is the Messiah. And when Jesus is pointed to with faith, really the doors to life are opened up.

They swing open. And so when you read that, when you read that passage, that you are given the keys to the kingdom of God, it is really saying that that confession, the thing that Peter had said, is the key to life.

It is the key to everything that we can think of. And to reject that message of Jesus being the Messiah, of Jesus being the Son of God, is to close the doors to the kingdom of God.

The rejection of that message is critical in the life of a person, whoever they are in the world. And so this is why the whole gospel and Peter's life is really in some ways defined by that thing that Peter has said there.

[25 : 48] There's the dangers of unbelief there, and there's the opening and closing the doors of the kingdom. And that's something for us to keep in mind as we go a little bit longer here on Peter.

Now, after this, do you remember what happens after this, after Peter does this incredible confession that Jesus is the Son of God? What happens immediately afterwards?

Well, if we had Bibles, I'd have you turn to it. But what happens is that Jesus says that he has to suffer and die. And what does Peter say to him? No, you can't possibly do that.

There goes our whole vision. There goes the whole industry. That is a strategically stupid thing to do. And he knew strategy, right? So he says, no, you can't do it.

And what does Jesus say to him? Get behind me, Satan. So this is in a very short period of time.

[26 : 52] You see the roller coaster. You see the high of that confession of faith. You see the low of really in some ways speaking for Satan. And what Jesus means by that is that was the temptation that Satan gave to Jesus.

You don't have to go through the suffering of the cross. You do not have to die. You can have the kind of power and influence that Peter would love to see.

And lots of good happen on earth without dying on the cross. And Jesus says, get behind me, Satan. And he explains what he is saying. He says, if anyone follows me, they need to take up their cross.

And that in following Jesus, you are following his footsteps through suffering and death on a cross as well. You are actually giving away your life so that you can have real life.

And of course, this is what Jesus does for us. He gives away his life so that the world might have life. So that we should not perish but have eternal life, that John 3 tells us.

[27 : 59] And this was a shock to Peter. And it was part of his being formed as a leader of Christianity. So you have these ups and downs in Peter's life.

You remember one thing he does, he's an impetuous person. And being an impetuous person, he takes great initiative. And sometimes it's not so great initiative. That's what you see in his life. It is initiative all the time. One of the things that happens, which is a very significant thing in his life, is this is a painting by Raphael.

It is the transfiguration. And you see Peter, James, and John up here. And we have Moses and Elijah up here. Moses has got the Ten Commandments and Elijah.

But this is where Jesus is revealed in his glory. And Peter is there. By the way, just as a bit of an aside, what Raphael did, this is the high point of his, this is just before he died.

[29 : 02] He actually didn't quite finish this. But what you see here is the healing of the boy who was possessed, which happens right after the transfiguration. So that's happening down here.

So two different times. But he's put them together. And they're pointing, you see, they're pointing to Christ. That this miracle, who he is, points to Jesus as being the son of God, the one who has come from heaven.

But in that, what does Peter do when he sees this? What does he want to do? Yeah, he wants to build these booths.

He wants to make it a shrine. He wants to capture the moment. And he is so excited about what he's seeing that he does again the thing that Jesus commands him not to.

This is not to be captured now. The glory will be in the cross. But this is who Jesus is. And Peter saw that, didn't he? He saw the glory of Jesus.

[30 : 02] He walked with Jesus for three years. He was a spokesman for the people. He was in the inner circle, as you see, of Jesus. And in the Last Supper, Jesus washes the disciples' feet.

And what does Peter say to Jesus when he's about to wash Peter's feet? Don't wash my feet. Yeah, don't do it.

And Jesus said, well, if you don't, if I don't wash you, you can't have any part of me. So what does Peter say? Wash all of me. I want all of it. And then at the end of that scene, he says, because Judas has left and Jesus says he's going to betray me.

And Peter says, I'm never going to betray you. I will always be with you. I will be committed to you. I would die for you. I'll lay down my life. And Jesus says, you're going to deny me. And he can't believe it.

He feels quite betrayed that Jesus would say that. But, of course, he does betray him. A very, very short time later. And this is a fantastic painting by Caravaggio that was in 1610.

[31 : 19] And you see, there's Peter there. And he is pointing to himself. He's, in a sense, implicating himself. And what is this woman doing? She is pointing to him as well.

And there's the guard. And in that moment, you see the denial of Peter. And, you know, close up, you see emotion on his face.

And he's trying to convince them that he doesn't know this man. He doesn't even know Jesus. But his accent has betrayed him. That is the very, very low point in Peter's life, of course.

And, you know, the thing that's interesting is when you read 1 Peter and 2 Peter, the theme of humility runs through those letters, and particularly 1 Peter.

Humility. Humility. And here's a guy who probably struggled with humility. He was a natural-born leader, a fantastic communicator, very successful in business.

[32 : 23] He often got what he wanted, it seems. But here, he denies his Lord. And it was absolutely devastating. And remember what happened after that, of course.

He knows that he sees Jesus tortured, the result of the torture. He sees him die on a cross. We can't imagine the depression, the absolute sense of hopelessness that Peter would have felt in this time.

This is the blackest moment in his life. But I think that that black moment, God used in a very, very powerful way in his life. Because you see a man, as he goes along, who is, I don't know a good word for it.

It is, it's not, the word mellow is not right. But it's a word, I think it is wisdom that permeates him. And an understanding and an openness to God's leading and direction that I think comes through that.

An understanding of the weakness of humanity as well that we see in him. And, you know, to combine that with great leadership, that humility, which all the, you know, the great books on management and so forth say how important humility is for great, great leaders.

[33 : 52] And he probably learned a fair amount of it here through the, through the mercy of God. And, and the wonderful thing, this is Raphael again.

And the wonderful thing is that Jesus restores him. And you see the upper part of the roller coaster here and the low part again, because this is Jesus, the risen Lord Jesus.

And he is with his disciples. They have breakfast together. And what is Jesus, Jesus has, has Peter come over to him. What does he say to him? Do you love me?

And, you know, again, imagine what his, what he was feeling when Jesus said that to him. You know, it would have been very hard to hear it in one way. And Peter says, Lord, he said, I, I love you.

And what does Jesus say to him? He says, feed my sheep. He says, this is how, this is how you will show your love for me if you feed my sheep.

[35 : 02] Uh, which is an amazing charge. You know, Jesus is giving him a responsibility, which is extraordinary, because this is the responsibility of Jesus. That Jesus is the great shepherd, isn't he?

And, and, uh, and the, the flock, the people that will come to know him are his sheep. And, and he is telling Peter, feed my sheep.

I mean, that is the greatest responsibility somebody can be given. Uh, and, uh, I like this. Notice what's, notice what's over here. There's a little flock of sheep that Raphael puts there in the background.

As a, you know, there's a bit of an object lesson there. And Jesus says it three times, doesn't he? And, and Peter gets a chance to say, I love you three times.

Uh, and it is no accident that it's for every time that he denied Jesus. That Jesus gives him the perfect opportunity to, to say before others, I love you.

[36 : 04] To say, I love you to him. Um, you know, in some ways, it's the low point and the high point for Peter. Uh, again, uh, you know, as far as that, that roller coaster.

It's, it's, it's an extraordinary moment that changes his life, um, forever because there's the next stage of his life happening right there.

And it, it is the stage of life till he dies, which will be tending, uh, tending Christ's flock, tending the sheep. Um, and so that's, so that's the ends of stage two.

I've talked about the introduction to Peter's life beforehand. I've talked about his life with Jesus a little bit. And then in the last 15 minutes, uh, I want to talk about his, his life, uh, as a, an ambassador of Jesus, where he actually does the ministry that Jesus does.

Uh, and that's the third part of his life. If you're sort of giving a eulogy for Peter, it is that life of being a missionary for, for, uh, Christ, tending his flock. Um, so are there any, any thoughts, um, or questions?

[37 : 17] Yeah. Did Nora Johnson help you with all the pictures? No, no. Uh, I should have asked her actually. Probably would have been good. And Ravi's, uh, where I was mentioning expository preaching or expository, like your speaking style, that would, that, that would be more the expository explaining?

And then if it's being written, it's called, um, exegesis. That's correct. It was good detail written or a good, uh, verbal explaining expository. Yep.

It's spoken exegesis. It's written because there's, I guess, I, but what Ravi was saying, your speaking style. Yeah. Defining your speaking style as expository. Yes. And when you, and when you can see things, and obviously these are not photographs, and we know that they aren't. I mean, what artists are trying to do is to communicate the truth of what happened. And to be able to, um, to actually go, not just head knowledge, but for us to be able to enter into that moment somehow.

And, you know, art can be a helpful way of doing that as well. Um, you know, obviously as long as it is accurate. Yeah. Yeah. What, uh, puzzles me a bit is that, you know, those paintings here is portrayed as a pretty old man.

[38 : 32] Yeah. Yeah. And, um, I, I think the assumption now is this being that he was probably the oldest that he had taught us. But, do you think he was even 30 when?

Well, as I put down on the, the, the, all of the things I read seem to point to around 1 B.C. I don't know how they can try to be so accurate. But, uh, all the things that we see written about him and when his death was, uh, seem to point to the fact that he was born very close to when Jesus was. So, and of course, you know, Jesus would have been around 33, uh, at the resurrection where he's talking to him here. So, Peter was probably the same exact age that Jesus was.

Uh, and you're right. You know, you tend to impose things about your own sort of culture. And that's the nice thing about looking at things that are old. You can pick those things out easier in a sense than we do when we're doing things in our present time.

So, anyway, that, that's the reason. I mean, it is a, is a helpful way of understanding, uh, the scene and the moment as well, which were very, very important, critical ones in Peter's life.

[39 : 39] Um, yeah. But he was, you know, several of the disciples were probably, um, younger than that, too. Like, John was, was likely much younger. Yeah.

Do you think it's possible that he would, that the artist is either representing parts of himself or else to repeat and repeat? I think so. I think so. How do they get those, uh, faces and, yeah.

Yeah, it'd be kind of a neat thing, isn't it? Show up in a master's work. Like, that's actually me there. Okay.

Okay. Now, I have, I, I'm going to turn now to, uh, uh, to the life of the church.

And, um, Peter, if you read the book of Acts, and, you know, it's actually a helpful thing for you to do. The book of Acts, the first, uh, 15 years, you know, and that's sort of the first 12 chapters.

[40 : 36] Is dominated by Peter. Peter dominates the scenes in a way that Paul does after that. Peter really recedes after that chapter. Um, but what you see in Peter is very interesting because he is foundational in building the church.

You know, Jesus' commission to him, uh, was, was very much fulfilled. And what he did was he, there was three things that were really kind of, um, it's like the world has opened up more and more to the gospel through Peter.

Do you remember Jesus, um, Jesus commissioned to his disciples in the book of Acts, chapter one, verse eight, where he says, you will be my witnesses. Where, where would he be?

Where does he say they will be his witnesses? Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. So you have, you have the Jewish people first with Jerusalem, Judea.

And then you have the Samaritans who are hated, of course, by the Jews, by the people of God.

And then you have the ends of the earth, which is what? It is the Gentiles, which really opens it up.

[41 : 49] Um, and this is what happens in Peter's life. There are three stages. The first is that, and I actually don't know who this painter is. I liked it because it was the best one that I saw that showed the day Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost.

And on that day, you have, you have Jews who are dispersed throughout the whole world who are listening to him. And they hear the gospel message in their own language. And, um, uh, and I want to read part of his message there.

He said, um, he speaks about Jesus. Uh, and in the middle of his message, he says, This Jesus God raised up, and of all that we are all witnesses.

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured this that you are seeing yourselves, that you are seeing and hearing, he has poured this out.

And when they hear this, that Jesus is exalted, people are cut to the heart. And they say, what shall we do? And what does he tell them what they need to do?

[42 : 58] He said they need to repent. So they're turning away from, um, uh, from their, from their beliefs that there is no Messiah to believing that Jesus is the Messiah, the giver of life, who forgives sin and gives his Holy Spirit.

And he says, be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For that promise that you have heard is for, uh, your children and for all who are far off, everyone who the Lord calls to himself.

Now, Peter believed that. Peter believed that God was calling people to himself far away and close by too. Uh, and that it is a promise that wasn't just for them, but for generations to come as well. Uh, and this is what his mission was. This is what his mission involved. Uh, that that promise that God had made would be actually given to people, told to people, so that they could be, uh, repent and receive the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, which makes them God's people, gives them eternal life.

So there, there is this beginning of this, um, this, the spread of the gospel among, um, the Jews. And then, and then we have the spread of the gospel among the Samaritans.

[44 : 20] And this was something that in Acts 8, you will see if you look it up, is that, uh, Philip goes and starts when there's a persecution. Uh, Stephen is killed. Persecution, uh, uh, church is dispersed.

Philip ends up going to Samaritan towns. And Samaritans come to faith in Jesus Christ. And Peter comes there, sees what is happening and prays for them. They receive the Holy Spirit.

They come to a living faith in the Lord Jesus. Peter is prominent in that. And he gives his blessing to that work of, uh, evangelism among the Samaritans, which was incredibly, uh, fruitful, very fruitful time.

Philip, uh, was a great evangelist for one thing. And so that was the second part. And then the third part, of course, is, uh, is when he is summoned to the home of the Roman centurion.

Do you remember this, um, um, and I couldn't find any good paintings on this, but the, uh, the dream that, that Peter has, what is it a dream of?

[45 : 23] There's a sheet. And on it is, uh, well, it's food of a kind. I mean, all of the outlawed animals are there. And what does God tell them to do, tell him to do?

He wants them to eat. Um, and it's a grotesque dream for him. It's a, it's a nightmare actually. You should call it Peter's nightmare. But it is right after that, that he is called by Cornelius and he comes and he sees that the Holy Spirit, God's work is in and among the Gentiles.

And, you know, in the council of Jerusalem, um, there is this big debate, you know, do we have to make the Gentiles into, into Jews before they are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ or not, or can they be, can they be brought in?

And I want to read just this, a line from Peter at, at Jerusalem and see if this sounds like an uneducated, uncouth fisherman. There's much debate and it is, it is also a scholarly debate as well. They're thinking through the scriptures. What, what do we do about the Gentiles? And Peter stands up and he says, brothers, you know that in the early days, God made a choice among you that by my mouth, the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe and God who knows the heart bore witness to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.

[46 : 48] And he made no distinction between us and them having cleansed their heart by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that not, neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Uh, there's, there's quite a bit of understanding there in, in Peter. He, but we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, just as they will.

Well, those are very, very wise words. Uh, and that they, they are words that actually go to the heart and to the mind as well. They're filled with the theology of grace and they're filled with compassion for those that are hearing the gospel.

This is what we're seeing in Peter. It's a marvelous example of his leadership and his wisdom and his ability to communicate very, very well. And that speech and God's word carries the day at the council of Jerusalem and the missionary, um, sort of impetus, the push into the Gentiles, into the world really goes strongly after that.

And you see, you see Paul come to the forefront. Now, I want to say that, that Peter, Peter is not perfect after that. Um, he goes up to Antioch, which is one of the biggest cities in the world at that time, which is just, it's up in Northern Syria.

[48 : 16] Close to a million people lived there at that time. They had a church that was very important. And he goes up there and there are people there who are, who, who want to make people, they have to follow the Jewish law and tradition in order to be truly Christian.

And Peter gets influenced by them and he kind of shuns the Gentiles there. And Paul, you see in the book of Galatians, um, pulls him up on the carpet and he tells him, you cannot do this if you understand the grace of God.

And wonderfully, Peter responds to that. He actually takes responsibility for that. And you see Peter go, go ahead to be a missionary to the Gentiles after that as well.

Um, we don't know for sure where Peter's travels were. If you look at the beginning of first Peter, you see that it seems as though he visits churches in what is now Turkey.

Uh, it seems like he may have been in Corinth as well, because remember, uh, Paul talks about these parties, you know, I follow, uh, Paulos and I follow Paul.

[49 : 21] I follow Cephas who is Peter. Um, but it seems to be almost certain that he ended up in Rome and that knowing that Rome was the center of the world, Rome was the Toronto of, uh, of the, of the, the ancient world.

So they knew that this was, this was a key for the gospel going out into the world. And it seems as though, although we have no firsthand evidence that Peter and Paul were very important in the life of Rome, in the church of Rome, uh, that both of them there, we know for sure Paul was there.

Um, uh, Peter, if I'm actually going to just put something up on the street screen here. This is the end of his, his, uh, his letter to Peter letter of Peter. And he writes about Silvanus who was probably Silas.

And he says, I've written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God.

This is what we've been hearing about in the letter of Peter. And it is filled with grace. He says, stand firm in it, which that's Peter's life, standing firm for the gospel.

After denying Christ, he stood firm for the gospel. Um, she who is at Babylon, do you know who that is? That's the church, uh, in Rome.

[50 : 44] And we're almost positive of that just because there wasn't much happening in Babylon at that time. It was a ghost town by then. And, um, uh, and you remember from revelation and so forth that Babylon is Rome.

So he's saying, she who is at Babylon, uh, the church in Rome, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings as does Mark, my son, who wrote the gospel of Mark. Uh, and so he's writing from Rome there.

And he's giving greetings from the church in Rome as well. Babylon was often a code name for Rome because letters were read. There was lots of censorship back then as well, or, um, uh, people who would, who would do much harm to them.

And so it seems that Peter ended up in, uh, in Rome, uh, and, and had, and strengthened the church there. And of course, this is a persistent sort of, um, this is a persistent, um, oh, I didn't bring this along with me, uh, tradition.

But it goes way back, all the way back to, uh, the first century where you have the early church fathers talking about Peter being in Rome, uh, within 30 years of his death, they actually write about this.

[51 : 59] So people like Clement, uh, wrote about this. And, um, uh, you see that there's a historian named Eusebius who got information from when he wrote in around 325, which was, um, you know, a little over 200 years after.

And he, he chose, uh, historians from way before him. And they wrote about, uh, Peter being in Rome. Uh, what happens in Rome is that there is a chance for him to become a martyr.

And he does, uh, and he, he stands for the gospel there in a time when Nero was emperor.

There was a, there was a terrible persecution of Christians. Nero wanted to blame the troubles in Rome and a fire and so forth on the, on Christians. Um, he was known for being a face of Christianity in a lot of ways, but a real leader among Christians there.

And his death, um, was of an unusual sort. You can see it. Do you know how, how he was, how he was, um, tradition, according to tradition, how he was executed?

[53 : 14] He was, he was executed upside down. That's right. On a cross. So the sentence for him would have been execution on a cross. Um, and Nero would have been the one to, to say that.

But he, according to tradition, refused to be executed in the way that Jesus was because he didn't feel worthy to die in the same way that Jesus did. And so tradition says that as Caravaggio picks up on that he was crucified upside down.

Now we do know that his, um, martyrdom had an effect on the church, that it strengthened the church considerably. That Paul and Peter's death, um, for the gospel, because of the gospel, uh, meant that many, many people, uh, came to faith and the church was strengthened in the end. Uh, and I want to, yeah, it's just about 10 o'clock. So I want to close with, with this, because there's lots of, we, we don't know for sure where, where Peter is buried.

Um, certainly, you know, there's persistent tradition that he's buried somewhere in Rome and there's excavations that was done underneath, uh, St. Paul's, I mean St. Peter's, um, in, in the 1940s and 1950, they had Life Magazine did a big spread.

[54 : 37] I saw in, on the internet on this, on the excavation underneath St. Peter's because there's a number of tombs there and there, they saw one inscription that says, you know, here is Peter.

Um, but, uh, they don't know for sure. Uh, but last year St. Francis brought out these, uh, relics of, of Peter. They take some of his bones, but we don't know for sure. But there's persistent tradition that he's buried somewhere in Rome.

And the interesting thing is, is near the place where he is buried, um, you don't hear anything about Nero. Nero does not have an effect on the world today at all.

But that, that's the Easter Mass in, uh, at St. Peter's Square, where there's 150,000 people spilling out from the church, uh, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They are worshiping Jesus. They believe the confession that St. Peter said when he said, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. Uh, this is Easter.

[55 : 37] And this is the effect that it has on the world. That through, through Peter, through the apostles, through that confession, uh, the gospel has gone out to the ends of the earth.

And certainly we look to Peter as this amazing, um, uh, this amazing witness. To the gospel of Jesus. Somebody who is deeply flawed, very impetuous, lots of rough edges.

Uh, he, he came from being a businessman in Galilee, uh, where if it wasn't for Jesus, there would have been no, not much effect beyond his immediate life and immediate surroundings.

And yet he becomes part of, uh, the ministry of the gospel, which transforms the world and actually transforms, uh, people's lives for eternity. This is, this is the more important thing.

Uh, and so you see this contrast, uh, of Nero who had great power over, over Peter to kill him in that way, but the power of gospel to through that suffering, through his witness, uh, to bring the gospel into the world.

[56 : 40] And so I think we should pray this prayer. It's a collect for the confession of St. Peter. And, um, I don't know if you can see that, but I think I would like to do is just say a short prayer.

And then if you can read that for us to read this collect together and think of the words that are said here. It's a pretty good, it's a good prayer, uh, that, that says what we were talking about here.

So let's, uh, let's just close our eyes for a moment. Uh, father in heaven, we praise you and we thank you because by your Holy spirit, your work in Peter, uh, the ministry of the gospel has gone out into the world.

We thank you that the church continued Jesus ministry of proclaiming the gospel of grace, the gospel of forgiveness of sins, the gospel of the power of God to change our lives, to bring your life into it by the sacrifice of Jesus, who is our lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world.

And father, we ask that you will, uh, by your grace, help us to trust you as Peter learned to do help us in the ups and downs in our life to embrace the hope, the promises that you have help us to take up our cross and to follow you as well.

[57 : 59] And father, we pray that you give us the joy of knowing that you call us to tend your sheep, that you call us to care for one another in Jesus name, that you call us to reach out to those who do not know you, who you are bringing into your kingdom as well.

Thank you that Peter is our example there. And father, we ask that you will continue at St. John's to work through the ministries of this church, to bring this message, this confession of Peter's into the lives of many, many people, that you are the living God, that Jesus is our Messiah, the ones who brings us, who brings us into your kingdom, who by his power makes us able to say to you, Abba, father, you are our father.

And so father, we pray this call it for the confession of St. Peter. Almighty father, who did inspire Simon Peter first among the apostles to confess Jesus as Messiah and son of a living God. Keep thy church steadfast upon the rock of this faith so that in unity and peace we may proclaim the one truth and follow the one Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.