

Simon's Introduction to Jesus

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[0 : 00] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, We have found the Messiah.

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, So you are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter, or I could also say, which means the rock.

We're going to begin tonight, God willing, looking at the life of Simon Peter, as we find that described for us in Scripture, primarily in the Gospels.

There are so many fascinating things about Simon Peter that bear study that we find such a variety of experiences and a variety of characteristics, indeed, about this man that he proves in many respects to be such a fascinating character in the descriptions of Scripture.

We tend perhaps to focus on the more negative aspects of Peter's character as we find his failures, his lapses, his speaking out of turn, if you like, those sort of features of his life as they're described.

[1 : 24] Perhaps we major on these, and that's itself understandable, because in one way it's gratifying to find these things and somewhat consoling to ourselves to find such failures and such lapses on the part of someone like Peter, who was one of the great leaders of the New Testament Church, because it really reminds us that there is no one perfect as a disciple, not even the apostles and not even Peter, one of the most prominent apostles.

But there are so many aspects of Peter as a man, as a disciple, as a servant of Jesus, that are positive emphases in Scripture as well.

Here's a man who is absolutely committed to the Lord most of the time, apart from what we read of his denial. Here's a man who has a natural tendency to speak out for the Lord.

Here's a man who's full of energy for the Lord, an energy which at times really needs to be curbed. Here's a man who is brought before us in the Scriptures as ready to defend his Lord, even sometimes drawing the sword to come to the Lord's physical defense.

But all of these natural characteristics in Peter, as well as the spiritual learning that he needs to engage in, they're all part of our study of Peter's life.

[3 : 00] And it's as you see his life developing, as the Scripture brings out these characteristics, that you find so much that is useful for ourselves in terms of telling us or giving us an insight into what is a disciple of Jesus?

What do you do when your discipleship sometimes stutters and even fails? How then do you anticipate the Lord dealing with that? What does it mean to actually come and make a confession of Jesus in the presence of other people the way Peter did?

How do we feel when the Scripture gives us the assurance that we are indeed disciples of Jesus? When the Word of Christ comes into our hearts to say, you are indeed one of mine, but you need to deal with certain things yet before you're perfect.

They're all features of the study of Simon Peter in the Scripture. And, of course, one of the main things that we'll come across again and again and build up as we go along, God willing, is how the grace of God harnesses and shapes and directs the qualities of this man and actually deals with the rough side of him as well, if you like, so that things become much smoother than they are in the beginning of his discipleship.

Where the rough edges of his life are dealt with by God, by Jesus, by God, so that he comes more and more as he's sanctified by the grace of God, he turns out to be the great leader that you find in the early chapters of the Book of Acts.

[4 : 44] And all of that is down to the grace of God and its power and its purpose in his life. There are two things here as we look at this first study of Simon's introduction to Jesus, Simon being introduced to Jesus Christ.

First of all, we'll look at how he was brought to Jesus because that itself forms a part of the passage. And then secondly, we'll look at Simon's experience in meeting Jesus, how Jesus spoke to him particularly, and what he said about him.

First of all, how Simon was brought to Jesus. And in fact, that is as much to do with Andrew as it is to do with Simon Peter himself, because Andrew plays such a major part in the way that Peter was brought to Jesus and then from that came to know Jesus for himself.

And in Simon being brought to Jesus, the two things within that we can look at briefly are first of all, Andrew's own enlightenment and then secondly, Andrew's evangelism.

His enlightenment, first of all, comes from the way that he began as a follower and as a disciple or a pupil, if you like, of John the Baptist. Because we're told there that these two disciples of John the Baptist heard John saying this about Jesus, behold, the Lamb of God, or earlier on in the passage, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[6 : 18] And when the two disciples, they began then to follow Jesus, one of them was Andrew. So Jesus turned around and he saw them following and he said to them, what are you seeking?

Now there's a question. There are two disciples having turned from, if you like, the Old Testament discipleship of John and now coming to be followers of Jesus and Jesus instantly turns around to them and saying, what's the purpose of this?

What's the meaning of this? What is it you're seeking? And there's a fascinating interaction between Jesus and themselves, full of the theology that John then expands on in the remainder of his gospel.

Because as they hear this question put to them, they then said, Rabbi, where are you staying?

In the older version, it's where do you abide? Now that's one of the great words of John's gospel, abiding or staying, because John uses it in terms of our discipleship and our connection with Jesus and the need to abide in Jesus and to abide in his love.

[7 : 26] But here is the way in which it's put. What are you seeking? And then they say, where are you staying? Where can we find your dwelling place?

And then he says, come and see. So they came, they stayed with him that day. And from then on, Andrew began to look for others to bring to Jesus.

It was that particular episode that convinced him this was the Christ. And as he was convinced that this was indeed the Messiah, the Christ, the promised Savior that they had been anticipating all the years of the Old Testament, the first thing he does once he has found this Messiah, once this Messiah has made himself known to him, once he has become convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is in fact a Messiah, he goes and he finds his own brother and he brings him to Jesus.

In other words, Andrew's enlightenment led to Andrew's evangelism. And that's one of the great points of discipleship, not just in studying the life of Peter, but in the whole theme of discipleship in the Bible.

We become disciples of Jesus, followers of Jesus, pupils of Jesus, not to keep all that learning to ourselves, not so as to internalize our experience and leave it there.

[8 : 53] It has to have an avenue by which it reaches out to other people. Andrew became an evangelist, a witness to Jesus from the moment he became his disciple.

Isn't there something in that for you and for me tonight? Are we trying to keep our discipleship hidden? Is there something in our experience of Jesus and being convinced that he is indeed not only the Messiah, but our Savior, my Savior?

And if he is, then this is our responsibility, this is our privilege. And this is what we as a congregation seek to do in different ways. as we have come to know exactly who this is, what the import of his life is, this Jesus.

So we seek to reach out and make it known to others. That's the whole point of evangelism. That's how we, that's why we do it. We don't do it in exactly the same way.

But that's the rationale behind so much of what this congregation is doing. Indeed, you could say all of what this congregation is doing, whether it's in Sunday school or even in creche or parent and toddler, whether it reaches through into Sunday school or Bible class or caber phase or women's groups or whatever it is.

[10 : 14] It's all about this Lamb of God. It's all about seeking to make known that this Jesus is in fact the Savior as was promised by God all these years.

And you see, as he engages in this evangelism, it's really a description of what we may call personal evangelism, isn't it?

Here's this man on his own. He's not directed by anybody else to do this. He doesn't wait until someone from the church comes along and says, okay, it's all right for you now to go and witness to Jesus and tell other, witness about Jesus and tell others about him.

He immediately goes and finds his own brother Simon and says to him, we have found the Messiah. We have found the Christ. We have discovered who this Christ is.

He's Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. But that's who he is. Now this is interesting because you find it following through into the next part of the passage in verse 45 where Philip, we're told there, he found Nathanael.

[11 : 26] There's something about this man, isn't there? This Andrew. He comes and when Jesus goes to Galilee, he finds Philip and Philip finds Nathanael.

So you see, the same thing's repeated in the experience of Philip and the first thing Philip does is goes and finds Nathanael and says the same thing to him as Andrew said to Peter, his brother, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote Jesus of Nazareth.

Nathanael said to him, can anything good come out of Nazareth? It's a disparaging kind of remark because in Nathanael's mind nothing of that caliber can come out of Nazareth. It's not the kind of place where you expect someone as important as the Messiah to originate from.

But what does Philip do? Well, he says, come and see. And that links you with what Jesus said to these two disciples of John when they turned and began to follow him.

Where do you stay? Where are you staying? Come and see. And it follows through into the way in which Andrew dealt with Peter to his really bringing him to the Messiah.

[12 : 38] He's bringing him to Jesus. In other words, he's saying, he's by that doing the same as is in the statement, come and see. And indeed, that opens up.

It's not something we're going to go into at all tonight. I'll leave it with you for your further study of it yourselves. But this theme of coming and seeing Jesus is so important in John.

And as you come and see Jesus for yourself, from that, if you like, emanates the whole spirit and work of discipleship. Think of the woman in chapter 4 of John.

The woman of Samaria. She came and Jesus spoke to her at the well, as you know, and revealed himself to her to be, revealed himself to be the Messiah.

What did she do? She left her water pot. The primary purpose that she came to draw water was forgotten. She left it there. She discovered something else. New water, spiritual living water.

[13 : 40] So she wanted to go and tell others about it. She went to the people of her own town. And what did she say to them? Come and see a man who told me all that I ever did is not this the Christ.

Chapter 9 is a chapter entirely taken up with a blind man who was cured by Jesus. Which fits in with the whole emphasis of coming to see Jesus and Jesus coming to remove the blindness from our eyes that we have naturally so as to see him as he really is and for what he really is.

Chapter 12 and verse 21. The Greeks that were coming to Jerusalem at that time. This is the request they made. Sirs, we would see Jesus. chapter 1724.

Coming near the end of Christ's great prayer for his people. Father, I will that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am that they may see my glory which you have given me which of course is heaven.

1935. A description of the cross and the one who's writing about this and his experience this John, this disciple, the one who witnessed these things. He saw and now he is bearing testimony to it.

[15 : 04] He saw the side of Jesus pierced with a spear and blood and water coming forth. And then go right ahead to chapter 20 and verses 6 and 8 in that chapter where you find Peter, one of those disciples along with the beloved disciple to come to the tomb where Christ's body had been laid.

It's now no longer there. The tomb is open but Christ's body isn't there. So, Peter firstly went in and he saw and believed.

Then the other disciple followed him and he went in and he saw and he believed. See, there it is. that whole strand of teaching seeing Jesus united to believing in him, seeing Jesus united to following him, becoming his disciple.

Is there anyone here tonight who has not seen Jesus? I don't mean seen with your eyes literally, of course, but seen him and appreciated and coming to know him for what he really is and who he really is.

Oh yes, you see him on the pages of the Bible. You see him in the preaching of the gospel. You see him in the lives of God's people but do you see him for yourself? Have you come to really see him?

[16 : 26] Have you come spiritually with the eyes of your soul to be convinced that this is the Savior for you? To see Jesus that way is so crucially important because there are far too many that really stop short of that as if it wasn't required as if it was enough just to see and know about him in the account of the gospel.

We would see Jesus tonight and this is his invitation as he was saying to these two disciples the very thing that came to convince Andrew in order that he come to find his brother Peter.

come and see that's what God is saying to us all that's what we say as we reach out to others as well there will be objections such as Nathaniel can any good thing come of this?

Is this really relevant to 2017? Come and see come and judge for yourself that's what you say to people don't judge it from outside come and see from within don't describe the church tell them from what you read in the papers of what you might believe what other people tell you come and see for yourself it's part of our evangelistic emphasis that you don't leave people just to have a caricature in their mind of what the church is or of what Jesus is or what the gospel is you always put before them well come and see for yourself don't denounce until you've come to test it come and see and so he took him you see to Jesus verse 42 he brought him to Jesus now that too is interesting isn't it and it's not just interesting but it's significant in our dealings with people and with one another patiently tactfully lovingly kindly this is our objective this is our objective to bring people to

Jesus not just to leave them in our companionship of course this is sometimes going to take some time this is going to require building up relationships this is going to require people to getting to know us as we really are by that I mean in the ordinary things of everyday life and coming to see where our Christian faith fits into all of that but this is the objective that through all of your witnessing your speaking you bring them to Jesus and whenever we're speaking to people about Jesus let's always try and bring them to Jesus whatever objections we come across let's try and learn I know it's not easy but it's something we have to try and learn to bring them to Jesus himself to find out for themselves who he is what he is like because the moment we come to know him for ourselves that's when the light comes on that's when things change that's when our prejudice is challenged and removed because we see him for ourselves as the people to whom that woman in chapter 4 witnessed the people of her town as they were streaming across the plains there to come to

[20 : 11] Jesus after this woman had said come and see they came and their testimony then was we now know that this is indeed the Messiah why because we have heard him for ourselves it's not just depending they said on your testimony we know because we have put it to the test we have heard it for ourselves we know that this is who he is so there's Simon being brought to Jesus and all that's in that in terms of Andrew's role in Simon coming to know Jesus Andrew's own enlightenment how he came to be convinced as to who Jesus was and from that Andrew's evangelism he found his brother he invited he found the Messiah explained to him what his experience had been and then he said he brought him to Jesus secondly let's look at Simon's experience in meeting with Jesus

Jesus looked at him and said so you are Simon the son of John you shall be called Kephas which means Peter well there are two things in that as well briefly first of all he was examined by Jesus and not just examined by Jesus but in a way that let Peter know that this is exactly what was happening it's not explained in a lot of words but when you look at what's there that's obviously what's happening Jesus looked at him and it's actually more to do with Jesus looking into him than it is Jesus looking at him this is not Jesus just looking at something from the outside this is Jesus looking into Peter's soul into Peter's character this is Jesus looking into Peter's future into Peter's discipleship into Peter and how he needs to develop and he saying to him so this is who you are Simon yes son of Jonas I know that but I'm telling you from now on you will be called

Kephas now when you come to Jesus one of the things that you must expect is that he will look into your soul you don't come across Christ in the gospel or Christ through the Holy Spirit brought to you and that work going on in your soul and you don't expect anything less than that Christ will actually examine you thoroughly that's a living examination and Peter had to learn that inevitably when you come to Jesus you're examined or at least you're brought to know that Jesus knows all about you already that's what's happening with this interview with this meeting because Peter is learning right from the very outset that this Jesus that he now comes to know as his Messiah and his Savior is the one that knows everything about him Peter doesn't really need to tell him he doesn't need to be concerned that somehow or other some aspect of his character has missed the notice of

Jesus and he needs to remind Jesus of this or that that he needs to take account of it's all known right from day one and how comforting that is nothing in your life is going to catch Jesus out nothing in your need is going to be beyond his reckoning beyond his knowledge beyond his competency to deal with it and Peter must learn increasingly as he goes on to depend upon the knowledge of Jesus the way that Jesus knows him so thoroughly and so is able to so thoroughly deal with him as an individual I think of that wonderful passage where he comes to be interviewed by Jesus in regard to his love in the final chapter of John he has denied his Lord three times it's been a grievous episode in his life he's rather aimlessly gone fishing and then Jesus appears on the shore and as one of the disciples says it is the

Lord it was probably John Peter being Peter just throws himself into the sea and makes his way towards Jesus and after and after they've had breakfast together the disciples and Jesus he takes Peter aside or he singles him out and says Simon son of Jonah do you love me more than these three times he asks him do you love me and on the third occasion what does Peter say in reply well he just throws himself on the superior knowledge of Christ and he says Lord you know all things you know that I love you and what he really meant by that surely was that there was no point in trying to hide anything from Jesus he knew it all already he knew about his lapse he knew about the failure he knew about the circumstances he knew what had caused it he knew heart at that very moment that he denied him but here he was he's being restored and he's being restored by this interview with

[25 : 36] Jesus bringing out of him a renewed confession but he's not relying on his own capacity to explain it it's as if he's saying to Jesus Lord I don't need the words you know all things you know despite what's happened you know that I love you you rely you see upon the superior knowledge and the competency of Jesus you are Simon the son of John he's looking into his heart he knows his character and as he does that so it's a lesson for ourselves who do you want to look after your life who do you want your future whose hands do you want your future to be placed in what's the best thing for the development of our character is it to give ourselves into the hands of Jesus or to try and look after ourselves is it to put something into the hands of

Jesus by way of an acknowledgement but still retain something for ourselves imagining that we have the competence somehow to see our way through now this is saying to us leave it all to him put yourself entirely in his hands let his superior knowledge let his perfect knowledge let his competence as the saviour take care of every aspect of your life that doesn't mean all the troubles will go away overnight it doesn't mean the testings will actually stop the moment you come to know Jesus it wasn't so as we'll see for this man Peter he had to be corrected many times he had to be spoken to by Jesus many times at one time Jesus spoke to him even in terms that said get behind me Satan but he's learning from the very day he met him that the very best thing he can do is let himself be governed by

Jesus let his past and his present and all his future be in the hands of this Messiah so you are Simon the son of John he knows that you shall be called Cephas this is your future you will be a rock and the following the following that we read off in the gospels Jesus Peter following Jesus is a following where this is going to be worked out in his life that he is indeed Cephas he's rock his life is going to be shaped and developed by this Lord by this Messiah that's come to take hold of his life and that's going to use him so mightily in his cause and in his church Peter wouldn't have been the man he was without all of these turns and shapings in his life and when you and

I find the imperfection that you inevitably find in your life when you and I find the failure that comes into our life from time to time as it does when you and I are afraid or that Satan tries to persuade you because that's in your life you can't possibly be a genuine true disciple of Jesus look to Peter look to the way that all of these developments even things that he ought never to have done or said but in the hands of Jesus they were all part of the shaping of his life until he turned into the spiritual giant that you find in the early chapters of Acts that doesn't mean his failures ceased at that point he had a dispute with Paul at one time he needed to be corrected right through to the end of his life as you and

I do but Jesus told him your future is in my hands you shall be called Cephas that's the name that I'm giving you Peter would have known the Old Testament very well and as he's examined by Jesus so he's taught by Jesus of the significance of this change of name Peter would have known I'm sure that the Old Testament contained an account of the change of naming for example with Abraham changed into Abraham of Jacob his name being changed into Israel and he would have known the significance of these changes for these men for these patriarchs for these men of God because God was changing their names in relation to how he was going to situate them and place them and use them in the development of his church and of his cause and here is Peter following that saying hearing Jesus saying you shall be called

[30 : 55] Cephas which means the rock in other words he is indicating to him even at the outset though he'll explain it much more later I'm going to use you Peter you're going to be one of my servants one of my apostles one of the leaders of my church Cephas and the meaning of Cephas virtually vanished when he denied the Lord three times doesn't appear to be a rock there does he nevertheless he's the stronger for it through his recovery and isn't that exactly what Jesus said to him as you find in Luke chapter 22 Simon Simon Satan has desired you that he may sift you as wheat that means all the disciples but I have prayed for you indicating this

Cephas this this change that I indicated the beginning of your discipleship Peter I have prayed for you that your faith does not fail and when you have recovered when you are restored every translation we give the word sometimes it's converted it really means turned round recovered again strengthen your brethren Peter was a better man having recovered from his lapses than he was before strange as that may seem why is that the case because that's simply how Jesus does things that's the kind of management of lives that Jesus himself carries out and carries through assuring us too that our future is safe in the hands of the Lord that in fact the future is far better for us in his hands than anywhere else safe with

Christ secure with Christ useful for Christ and whatever is put into Christ's hands peace the exciting thing is you never know how it's going to turn out as he uses it sometimes indeed very often it'll be quite beyond your own expectations and the expectation of others people might say to you who are you to be a disciple of Jesus why do you think that you would have anything to contribute to the gospel to the cause of Christ they might have said the same of Peter he's far too impetuous he's far too ready to speak without thinking he's far too vulnerable in his own sense of self sufficiency but he's in the hands of Jesus and Jesus is turning him and shaping and developing him into the apostle he came to be when

Jesus fed the 5,000 it wasn't at all obvious that a little bit of food available in the loaves and the fish were going to feed more than just a few of that 5,000 but it's interesting how when you read the passage in the Bible in the four gospels the account you have of the feeding of the 5,000 and it's a very prominent miracle in each of the gospels when Jesus was told about there only being these few loaves and these fish he said bring them here to me so they brought them to Jesus same as Andrew did to Peter and as Jesus took them in his hands and blessed them he then gave it out to the disciples to give to the multitude you see what happens what goes into

Jesus hands comes out very differently to what went in and when Jesus takes it upon himself to use a life a life that's been put in his hands don't ever think that you know exactly how that's going to turn out don't ever think that that's not going to result in great things the exciting thing about being a disciple is you never know how much Jesus is going to achieve through you and by you and that's why tonight for you and for me the best thing possible is that we are in the hands of Christ that we are disciples of this Messiah that we are ready to serve him as he will use us the obedience is our side of it how it turns out is the

[36 : 28] Lord's part of it and both are important so tonight as disciples of Jesus let's wait upon the same energy that Peter came to know and tonight if you're not yet a disciple of Jesus well come and see come and respond to his call to his invitation to his promise because whenever we find obedience emphasized in scripture it's always abundantly followed by the promises of God let's pray Lord our gracious

God help us to know more of the privilege it is in serving you and being your disciples we pray that you would make us increasingly teachable so that we may follow you in whatever way you direct us and we pray oh Lord that it may be our concern to know more of you as we continue to follow you bless we pray the message of your word to each of us this evening you know us each one most perfectly you read our thoughts and our minds even as we've been here this evening oh Lord and as you did to Simon long ago so you are able to do to us and for us too to make us into the kind of people who will serve you and bring benefit to others by coming to know you receive our thanks we pray cleanse us from all our sin accept us freely for Jesus sake amen well let's conclude our service this evening singing in

Psalm 119 Psalm 119 and that's on page 413 singing verses 156 through to 160 the tune is Martyrdom that's on page 413 O Lord both great and manifold thy tender mercies be according to thy judgments just revive and quicken me my persecutors many are and foes that do combine yet from thy testimonies pure my heart does not decline verses 156 to 160 to God's praise O Lord both great and manifold thy tender mercy be according according to thy judgments just revive and quicken me my persecutors many are and foes that do combine yet from thy testimonies pure my heart does not decline

I saw transgressors and was grieved for thee keep not thy word see how I love thy law as thou art kind me quick and Lord from thee beginning all thy work hath been most true and sure thy righteous judgment mends every one forever more more endure

I'll go to the main door this evening after the benediction now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always amen to do win to can monde