

Introduction

As parents, and as our children grow and mature, we are often impressed by the fact that they are very different from each other.

I don't know if that comes as a surprise.

Sometimes I think it does.

Of course, they might exhibit certain family characteristics, but each of them has their own personality with their own strengths and weaknesses.

And I'm sure the disciples would have been very different from each other.

However, unlike our children, they were chosen.

And they were chosen by Someone who knew everything about them.

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This morning I would like to talk about a disciple, who, if we possessed Jesus' marvellous insight, it is unlikely that we would have chosen him.

And to get us on board as quickly as possible, I am calling this meditation---Persevering with Peter.

### **Persevering with Peter**

Back in the good old days, my father worked the family farm with a steel-wheeled tractor backed up by a good team of horses.

That is, they were a good team once the largest member of that team got settled down.

You see, in the spring, after a long time in the barn, King was almost uncontrollable.

Certainly, this big strong horse could be an asset.

But as time went on, my father became more and more convinced that his enormous strength could be a recipe for disaster.

So, one day, when a horse trader came by, my father traded him for a more controllable horse.

He hated to do it because King would be headed up north to pull logs out of the bush.

It would be a hard and very dangerous life.

But what could he do?

He just couldn't control his big horse anymore.

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When Jesus called Peter, He told him He would make him a fisher of men.

Certainly, that promise would be kept, but only after Jesus would spend many hours in praying for and persevering with His big fisherman

You see, Peter was much like my father's horse.

He was strong and brave, and he was a natural leader of men, but sometimes he had a problem when it came to being a good follower.

In fact, when push came to shove (and I say this with all due reverence), there were times when Peter thought he was a better judge of a situation than Jesus was.

For instance, there was the time when **“Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”**

As you can imagine, that wasn't what the disciples wanted to hear.

They had been sent forth as ambassadors of the kingdom and representatives of Israel's Messiah. Now, Jesus was talking about a cross, not a crown.

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I wonder what Peter thought as he listened to Jesus' prediction.

Perhaps he suspected that the relentless persecution and open hostility Jesus had been bearing on an almost daily basis had dampened His spirits?

Maybe He was depressed.

Well, something must be done, and he was just the man to do it!

So, as Matthew 16:22 tells us--- **“Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him** (that’s right, rebuke Him), **saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”**

Can you imagine Peter taking his Lord to task in such a manner?

At least he had sense enough to take Him aside and not rebuke Him in front of the other disciples.

Nevertheless, his actions were completely out of order, and Jesus told him so---**“Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”**

Get behind Me, Satan?

Wasn’t that a little over the top?

Well, no, it wasn’t.

Jesus knew exactly who He was talking to.

The last time He had said those words He was face to face with the great deceiver himself.

Now He was addressing Satan through one of His disciples, but the motivation was just the same. He was being asked to forsake His Father's will, and that was completely out of the question.

As He told the Jews that day in the temple---"**The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.**"

And He would continue to do His Father's will even when it would mean crying out in agony---"**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**"

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Of course, Peter didn't understand the implications of his proposal.

And many times, we don't understand the big picture either.

However, if you want to be an asset rather than a deficit, you must---"**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own**

understanding” In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”

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And sometimes Peter spoke on the Lord’s behalf when he had no business doing so.

Matthew 17:24-26 **“When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.”**

Probably, this was the tax that we read about in Exodus 30:12-16 that was collected for the maintenance of the temple.

It could be paid in Jerusalem at the time of Passover,  
or, as in this case, it could be paid a month earlier  
in your home area.

In most cases, a good Jew would pay the tax, but there  
were exceptions.

For instance, the Sadducees disapproved of it, and  
there were others who felt they should only pay it  
once in a lifetime.

And then there were the legitimate exceptions.

Rabbis were exempt, as were the priests in Jerusalem.

So, the question was---“**Does your Teacher not pay  
the *temple* tax?**”

And without taking the trouble to consult with Jesus,  
Peter immediately responded “Yes”.

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But should Jesus pay an atonement tax to maintain
His own Father’s house?

Or, as Jesus put it---Do the kings of the earth collect
taxes on their own sons?

Of course not.

In like manner, neither should the Son of God be taxed to maintain His Father's temple.

Nevertheless, in order to honour His disciple's word, Jesus paid the tax---"**lest we offend them.**"

It was the same principle He had adopted concerning John the Baptist's baptism of repentance.

Jesus had no sin to repent of.

But as a good Jew, He told John to "**Permit *it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.***"

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Yes, Peter had his bad points, but he had some very good ones.

Remember that awful storm on the Sea of Galilee?

While the rest of the disciples were crying out in fear, Peter saw this life-threatening storm as an opportunity.

His only requirement was that it really was Jesus out there in the storm, and that He would command him to walk on the water.

So, did Jesus cry out, “Don’t be silly Peter!”

Or did He reprimand him with the words--- “Stop showing off!”

No, He didn’t.

In fact, and I think, with a great deal of enthusiasm, He called out--- **“Come!”**

Well, Peter didn’t make it very far, did he?

And we can’t miss the disappointment in Jesus’ voice when He said--- **“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”**

But, when the storm was over and they had reached the other shore, Peter was the only disciple that had walked on the water.

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As I look back on my own life, I can see trials and tribulations that I could have handled much better.

Instead of being plunged into despair, I could have called out in faith---“**Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.**”

And He would have said “**Come.**”

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And how often do we venture forth in our own wisdom when the very Son of God constantly felt the need for prayer?

For instance, Luke 6:12-13 tells us, He---“**went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.**”

The time had come to select 12 men from His many followers.

These men would receive the benefit of His personal teaching for 3 ½ years.

And although they didn't know it, most of them would be pillars in the church of Jesus Christ.

So then, and no doubt at the end of a very busy day, Jesus--- **“continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.”**

And that wouldn't be the last time His apostles would be the subject of His prayers.

In fact, if we listen in on His High Priestly prayer uttered near the end of His earthly ministry, we will find that His apostles were continually covered in prayer.

John 17:8-9 **“For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. "I pray for them. I do not**

**pray for the world but for those whom You  
have given Me, for they are Yours.”**

And certainly, He had been covering His big fisherman  
in prayer.

**“Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you,  
that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have  
prayed for you, that your faith should not fail;  
and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen  
your brethren.”**

Yes, dear Peter.

So hard to handle, so coveted by Satan, and no doubt  
so often the subject of Jesus’ prayers.

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Yes, in many ways, Peter was like my father’s strong-
willed horse.

And as the apostles gathered for their last Passover
meal, Peter’s almost fatal flaw surfaced once
again.

The disciples must have looked on in unbelief, as Jesus---**“rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.”**

I don’t know what they were thinking as Jesus moved among them washing their feet.

Perhaps they were embarrassed.

After all, every one of them had been willing to eat the Passover meal with unwashed feet rather than take the place that their Master was now taking.

Maybe that’s why they sat there so submissively.

But not Peter!

“Lord, are You washing my feet?” Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.”

No, he didn't understand, and he would never understand.

How could his Master stoop to the place of a servant?

“Trust in the LORD (Peter) And lean not on your own understanding.”

But he would have no part of it!

“You shall never wash my feet!”

Now you don't call someone your Lord and at the same time tell him what he can't do.

It just doesn't work that way.

And it wasn't going to work for Peter either.

"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

And that settled it---**“Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!”**

So, did Peter learn his lesson?

Not really.

And there would be trouble ahead.

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That night, as they sat around the Passover table,  
Jesus made a startling announcement.

John 13:18-19 **“I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’**  
**“Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am *He.*”**

Dropping down to V 21 **“When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.”**

Jesus wasn’t **“troubled in spirit”** because He had suddenly realized there was a traitor in their midst.

No, He had known that all along.



In fact, He had known it when He chose Judas.

As He said in V18, **“I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’”**

Yes, Jesus knew exactly who the traitor was.

But it is also quite evident that He didn’t want the disciples to know.

And that begs the question, *If Jesus wanted to keep Judas’s identity secret, why did He bring the subject up in the first place?*

Well, the answer to that question is found in V 19

**“Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am *He*.”**

You see, when Jesus would be arrested and eventually crucified, He didn’t want His disciples to mistakenly believe that He had been caught off guard.

If He could be duped so easily, how could they believe  
He was the Son of God?

Yes, they must know that Jesus *knew*, and by the  
way, Judas must know that Jesus *knew*.

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So then, if it was so essential that the traitor's
presence be known, why was it equally essential
that Judas's identity be kept secret?

No doubt Jesus was dealing with what we would call a
very ticklish situation.

And I believe Peter was the main reason for His
caution.

Yes, He knew that the moment Peter realized Judas
was a traitor, he would block his exit, and no
doubt with a good deal of violence.

But that wasn't the plan, was it?

Judas must be given a free choice.

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So, now that we understand the prevailing situation, let's read on.

John 13:23-30 **“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus’ breast, he said to Him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.” And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, “Buy *those things* we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.**

**Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.”**

At this point, I think it would be beneficial to understand the relative positions of some of the disciples around the Passover table.

To do this, I'm relying on the knowledge of others who understand the customs of the day much better than I.

Although regular tables were used for the most part, in the case of a special meal like this one, the participants would be lying on their stomachs leaning on their left arm and eating with their right hand, around a very low table.

And it appears, from the account we have just read, that John was lying on Jesus' right and Judas on His left, which according to the custom of the day, was a place of honour.

Also, if we visualize Judas in this position, we can understand why, in Matthew 26:25, he could say

(no doubt very quietly) "**Rabbi, is it I?**" And Jesus could answer (again very softly) "**You have said it,**" and no one else would be the wiser.

Obviously, Peter was on the opposite side of the table where he could motion to John to find out who the traitor was.

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So then, it would be easy for John, who was lying on Jesus' right, to lean back on His breast and whisper---"**Lord, who is it?**"

And it would be just as easy for Jesus to answer (again very softly) "**It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.**"

Remember, Judas would be lying on Jesus' left in the place of honour, and (according to custom) slightly behind Him.

Also, it wouldn't be unusual; indeed, it would be an honour to have the host dip a piece of bread and hand it to the person on His left.

So then, when Jesus said, **“What you do, do quickly”**---**“no one at the table”** (except John, who could be trusted not to intervene) **“knew for what reason He said this to him.”**

In fact, some of them thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had sent him on a legitimate errand.

So, Judas, who now knew he had been discovered, spurned any opportunity to repent, and **“went out immediately.”**

And as the Scripture says---**“it was night.”**

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Now, I think it is important to notice that Jesus didn't ask Judas to leave.

He had simply said---**“What you do, do quickly.”**

It was Judas's decision.

And he was sticking with it!

In fact, it was a decision he had made before he shared in the Passover meal.

He had gone to the scribes and Pharisees and said---

**“What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.”**

At the beginning, I think Judas was attracted by the important place he expected to receive in Jesus' kingdom.

But now that Jesus was rejected, He was nothing more to him than a piece of merchandise, and 30 pieces of silver seemed like a good price.

However, now that his treachery had been discovered, he---**“went out immediately,”** and the wheels of prophecy continued to turn.

**“Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. "If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.”**

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Yes, after 3 ½ years in Jesus' company, Judas chose money rather than the Messiah.

And there might be someone here today who knows Jesus is the Son of God.

You even know that He died for your sins, but something is holding you back.

Something that you value more than the Lord Jesus.

It could be money; it could be the pleasures of sin for a season.

It could be many things.

Jesus has the same advice for you as He had for Judas.

“What you do, do quickly.”

Make your decision *now*.

“In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Tomorrow might be too late.


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That night in the upper room, Jesus had a lot of work to do.

Only a few weeks ago His disciples had been sent forth as ambassadors of the kingdom.

As such, they were to be honoured by having their needs met.

That's why Jesus instructed them to---"**Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals.**"

But those days were over.

From henceforth, as Jesus told them----"**he who has a money bag, let him take *it*, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. "For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.'** For the things concerning Me have an end."

Yes, the Messiah had been rejected along with the kingdom.

There were dangerous days ahead.

**“So they said, “Lord, look, here *are* two swords.”**

**And He said to them, “It is enough.”**

Two swords for 11 men.

But who would carry them?

Unfortunately, Peter was one of them.

I can almost hear him saying, “I’ll take one of those.”

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And something else had changed.

Up to this point, Jesus could simply walk away from danger.

When his neighbours dragged Him out of the synagogue and tried to throw Him over a cliff, He simply passed **“through the midst of them.”**

When---**“they took up stones to throw at Him”**---

“Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple,

going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

His hour had not come.

But now, as we listen in once more to Jesus' High Priestly prayer, we find Him saying---**“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You---”**

Yes, the time had come for the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

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And Jesus said something else in His High Priestly prayer.

Something that pertained to His disciples.

**“Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”**

These were the words of a faithful Shepherd concerning His Father's sheep.

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So, that night in the garden, two things had to happen.

Jesus must be arrested, and the disciples must escape unharmed.

Under normal circumstances, that would be quite a tricky manoeuvre.

Let's spend some time in the garden and see how things played out.

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That night Jesus would face the supreme test of His love for, and obedience to, His Heavenly Father.

He was to become sin for us, and for the first time in His experience, He would not be able to say--- **“I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”**

Three times He offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death.

And as His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood, He plumbed the very depths of obedience.

And then, incomplete submission, He said---“**O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.**”

And having settled the issue once and for all, He stood beside His sleeping disciples and waited for the multitude to arrive.

He would not resist arrest because it was His Father’s will.

He would protect His disciples because it was His will.

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Eleven men with two swords confronting a multitude with swords and clubs.

Outnumbered?

Yes.

But it was the multitude that was outnumbered.

Twelve legions of angels stood ready, just waiting for Jesus’ command.

Judging by a Roman legion (which would be about 5000 men) Jesus would be talking about 60,000

angels with their hands hovering over 60,000 swords.

The sound of clashing metal would have been deafening and the destruction would have been complete.

Did I say 60,000 swords?

Actually, there were 60,002.

Luke 22:49 tells us ---**“When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”**

However, before Jesus could answer that question, Peter **“struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.”**

Yes, Peter nearly upset the apple cart.

As a faithful Shepherd, Jesus had provided for His disciples’ safety.

“I have told you that I am *He*. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,” that the

saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

However, that's when Peter came out swinging, and in so doing, hazarded the lives of all the disciples.

He had boasted---"**Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!**"

And now he was proving it.

But that wasn't the point, was it?

Jesus could have easily defended Himself, but how then "**could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?**"

"Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

Yes, Peter needed to learn the same lesson that we all need to learn.

You must "**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**"

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We are all familiar with Peter's denial, so I will not spend a great deal of time here.

However, I would like to point out his physical position in relation to Jesus as he stood around the fire and warmed himself.

Luke 22:61 tells us that when Peter denied the Lord, Jesus turned and looked at him.

That meant they were close enough to see each other, and in all probability, close enough hear each other.

So, what would Peter be hearing as he secretly stood amongst his enemies and listened to the trial?

Well, the high priest was questioning Jesus about His doctrine.

And in so doing, he was violating a basic point of law.

You see, a judge cannot ask a prisoner to testify against himself.



That information must be provided by reliable witnesses.

That's why Jesus said---**“Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.”**

The high priest also questioned Him about His disciples.

Jesus wouldn't answer that question, but you can imagine how that inquiry affected Peter.

Obviously, they were trying to get information to assist them in rounding up His followers.

Everything seemed to be closing in.

First, a servant girl thought she recognized Peter as a follower.

And then someone said--- **“You also are of them.”**

And finally, someone recognized his Galilean accent, and said --- **“Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”**

And when he **“began to curse and swear, saying, “I do not know the Man,”** Jesus, with blood and spittle running down His face---**“turned and looked”** at him.

Not a word was spoken, but the words Jesus spoke in the Upper Room must have echoed in Peter’s ears ---**“Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”**

Suddenly, a rooster crowed, and a new day dawned.

For Peter, it was a day of denial and defeat.

For Jesus, it would be a day of blood and brutality.

But for the millions of hopeless sinners standing just outside the gates of hell, it was a day of rescue and redemption.

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Well, the events of that day and the next passed swiftly and tragically.

Jesus was condemned and nailed to a Roman cross.

The disciples, who had been the heralds of the kingdom, were meeting behind closed doors for fear of the Jews.

And then, on the third day, Mary Magdalene brought the unbelievable news that **“she had seen the Lord.”**

Suddenly, everything changed, and that very evening, Jesus stood in their midst in His resurrection body!

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In process of time, some of the disciples left Jerusalem and returned to Galilee.

At Peter’s suggestion, they went back to their old life of fishing.

That night they caught nothing.

The next morning, as they returned, tired and discouraged, they saw *someone* on the shore.

Suddenly, the stranger called out ---**“Children, have you any food?”** They answered Him, **“No.”**

He shouted back--- **“Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find *some*.”**

And you know the rest of the story.

When they finally got the 153 large fish on shore, they found a fire of coals, and fish laid on it, and bread.

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After breakfast, Jesus zeroed in on Peter.

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”

No doubt referring to the fish.

And Peter answered ---**“Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”** He said to him, **“Feed My lambs.”** He said to him again a second time, **“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”** He said to Him, **“Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”** He said to him, **“Tend My sheep.”** He said to him the third time, **“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”** Peter was grieved because He said to him

the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

And that's how Peter, who had received Jesus' promise to become a fisher of men, was also commissioned as an under shepherd.

At one point in Jesus' earthly ministry, when multitudes were forsaking Him, Peter stood firm. Speaking on behalf of the other disciples he said---

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It was a word of affirmation in a sea of unbelief, and with great emphasis Jesus responded---**"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven."**

And then He gave Peter his new name.

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

Not that the church would be built on Peter, as the Catholic religion affirms, but that it would be built on the rock of Peter’s confession---**“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

And continuing, Jesus said---**“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”**

What did He mean by that?

I think the events of the Book of Acts gives us the answer.

Yes, Peter was given the privilege of opening the door of the church of Jesus Christ both to Jews and Gentiles.

Briefly, this is what happened.

After the day of Pentecost, when devout Jews of every nation under heaven gathered at Jerusalem, Peter, starting with the prophet Joel and guiding them through their Old Testament Scriptures, preached Christ unto them.

As a result, 3000 Jewish souls were added to their number.

Again, after the lame man was healed in the temple, Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was able to draw 5000 additional Jewish brethren into the Gospel net.

And we all know how Peter, despite his Jewish convictions, was sent to the house of Cornelius to open the door of the church to the Gentiles.

Yes, Peter became a fisher of men.

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And as Jesus' faithful under shepherd, and along with the other apostles, Peter was given special powers.

For instance, in Acts 5:14-16 we read---“**And**

**believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.”**

Gifts from the Holy Spirit---even to the raising of Dorcas from the dead.

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And so, Peter, the big fisherman, who was so used to doing things his way, became an obedient servant of Jesus Christ---even unto a martyr's death.

But was he, as the Catholic Church claims, the first bishop of Rome from whom there has been an unbroken succession of popes?

Peter never made such a claim.

No, he was simply a fisherman whom Jesus persevered with and prayed for.

And step by step, he became an apostle, a fisher of men and an under shepherd of the Lord Jesus.

A man who simply called himself---“**Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ.**”