

# Epilogue

## What Happened to Simon Peter?

This is the account of Simon Peter, the apostle of Jesus and the leader of the first Christians. This account is from the Gospel According to Luke, the Book of Acts, and the letters of Peter.

### The Gospel According to Luke

Simon first met Jesus in his hometown of Capernium. After teaching, Jesus went to Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law had a high fever, and Jesus healed her. Luke 4: 38-43

Once Jesus got into Simon's fishing boat and told him to go out and catch some fish. Jesus was a teacher, not a fisherman, but Simon showed respect to the teacher and put out to sea. They caught more fish than their boats could hold! Simon was amazed and afraid. He was beginning to see that Jesus was not an ordinary man. He said to Jesus, "Go away from me, Lord!...I am a sinful man!"

But Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. From now on you will catch people." Luke 5: 1-11

Peter followed Jesus everywhere. He watched his miracles and listened to his teaching. When Jesus chose 12 men to be his disciples, he chose Simon and gave him a new name. He called him Peter, the Rock. Luke 5: 8

Everything that Jesus said and did became a lesson for the disciples. Once he stopped a storm and saved them all. Luke 8:22-25 He told his disciples that he wanted them to be like him. He let the disciples help with a miracle: feeding 5000 people with only two fish and five small loaves of bread. Luke 9:10-16 Twice Jesus sent Peter and the others out on their own and they were able to do miracles themselves. Luke 9: 1-6 and Luke 10: 1-24 Peter, James, and John were able to watch Jesus give life to a young girl who had already died. Luke 8: 40-56

Jesus asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered for all of them, "You are the Christ of God." When they said that, Jesus began teaching them more. He told them that he was going to die in Jerusalem then come back to life on the third day. He said it had to happen that way. Peter did not understand this; none of the disciples did. Luke 9:18-27

Soon after this, Jesus took Peter, James and John up on a mountain with him to pray. While Jesus was praying, two men from the past came to talk with him about his death. Peter was there. He heard God Himself say, “This is my Son, listen to Him.”<sup>1</sup>Luke 9: 28-36

When Jesus had dinner with them for the last time, Peter finally understood that Jesus was going to die. Jesus taught the disciples that a leader was a servant, and he himself was the example. Luke 22: 25-27 He told them that he was going to give his life for them. Luke 22: 19-22 Peter told Jesus, “I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, you will say three times that you don’t know me. And you will do it before the rooster crows today.” Peter was so shocked. He did not know what to say. How could he do that to Jesus? Luke 22: 33-50

When they arrested Jesus, someone cut off the ear of the guard. Luke 22: 50 The disciple John tells us that was Peter. John 18:10 Yet Peter followed Jesus and the guards to the courtyard and stayed there all night while most of the disciples ran away. Peter was brave...but he was also afraid. Three times he said he did not know Jesus. When the rooster crowed, Peter realized what he had done. He loved Jesus! He was ready to die for Jesus! But when he needed to be strong, he was weak; when he needed to stay with Jesus, he failed him. He went outside and wept. Luke 22: 54-62

Then Jesus died. How could he? “All those who knew Jesus stood not very far away, watching those things.” Then the men went to a hiding place, while the women went to prepare Jesus’ body for burial. Luke 23: 46, 49, 55-56

The women were the first to find the tomb empty and the body gone. “They were wondering about this...” when they saw some angels. The angels told them, “Jesus is not here! He has risen! Remember how he told you he would rise. It was while he was still with you in Galilee. He said, ‘The Son of Man must be handed over to sinful people. He must be nailed to a cross. On the third day he will rise from the dead.’” Luke 24: 4-7

“Then the women remembered Jesus’ words.” They ran to tell the disciples everything, but the disciples couldn’t believe it. “But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. He bent over and saw the strips of linen lying by themselves. How was Peter thinking? The angels said that Jesus was alive again. Peter had not seen Jesus yet, but he saw the stone rolled away and the strips of linen cloth. He went away, “wondering what had happened.” Who rolled away the stone? If someone stole the body, why would they take off the burial clothes first? What about the angels? The angels said Jesus was alive! Can it be true?

---

<sup>1</sup> See also II Peter 1:16-18.

Peter wanted to see Jesus alive. He knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but how could anyone come back from the dead? He knew that Jesus brought others back from the dead,<sup>2</sup> but how could he bring himself back?

Peter was too sad and upset to think straight. If Jesus said he was going to rise from the dead, then he was either telling the truth, telling a lie, or he was crazy – saying things that could never be true.<sup>3</sup> Peter believed Jesus told the truth, but he could not believe this. What could convince Peter that Jesus is alive?

In Luke 24:34, Jesus appeared to Peter. He met with Peter alone before he met with the rest. What do you think Peter did when he saw Jesus? Perhaps he started by asking for forgiveness. To hear his Lord say, “I forgive you; I love you,” would be Peter’s greatest joy.

Some of the disciples thought that Jesus was a ghost. He told them, “Why do you have doubts in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is really I! Touch me and see. A ghost does not have a body or bones. But you can see that I do...Do you have anything here to eat?” Luke 24: 38-40

## The Acts of the Apostles

Luke continues the story in the book of Acts; “In many ways he proved that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days. During that time he spoke to them about God’s kingdom.” Acts 1: 3

Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem until they received a gift, the Holy Spirit. When Jesus went up to heaven, the Holy Spirit was given to all believers. The Holy Spirit is a counselor who helps us know God and continues the work of Jesus. Jesus was “God with Us” on earth. The Holy Spirit is “God inside Us.”<sup>4</sup>

Seeing Jesus alive again and receiving the Holy Spirit changed Peter forever. Before that time, Peter was a leader, but he often wanted to be first. He loved Jesus, but he often acted without thinking. Only forty days after the resurrection, Peter got up in front of a crowd of thousands to tell them about Jesus. He was in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus was killed. He said, “You have nailed Jesus to the cross. But God has made him both Lord and Christ.”

Luke continues in the book of Acts:

When the people heard this, their hearts were filled with shame. They said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter replied, “All

<sup>2</sup> Luke 7: 11-17, Luke 8: 40-57, John 11: 38-44

<sup>3</sup> This argument comes from C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 1: 4, 5, 8-11, 2: 1-13 For more information on the Holy Spirit, see John 14: 15-30.

of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then your sins will be forgiven.”... “Those who accepted his message were baptized. About 3000 people joined the believers that day.” Acts 2: 14-41

After that, the believers stayed together and the disciples led them. Peter healed people and did other miracles. Acts 2: 42-47 Several times he was arrested. Once, Peter healed a man and everyone in Jerusalem found out about it. The Jewish leaders told Peter and John “not to speak or teach at all in Jesus’ name.”

Peter and John said, “Judge for yourselves. Which is right from God’s point of view? Should we obey you? Or God? There’s nothing else we can do. We have to speak about the things we’ve seen and heard.” Acts 3: 1 – 4: 22

## **Peter’s Letters**

Peter wrote two letters to churches, “I Peter” and “II Peter.” When we read his letters, we can see the change in Peter’s life. Here are some of his words:

### **Joy**

In [God’s] great mercy, he has given us a new birth and a hope that is alive. It is alive because Jesus rose from the dead. He has given us new birth so that we might share in what belongs to him. It is a gift that can never be destroyed....Through faith, you are kept safe by God’s power....Because you know this, you have great joy. 1 Peter 1: 3-6

### **Grace**

Put your hope completely in the grace that will be given to you when Jesus Christ returns...The blood of Jesus set you free from an empty way of life...You were bought by the priceless blood of Christ. He is the perfect lamb. 1 Peter 1:13, 18-21

### **Love**

You have made yourselves pure by obeying the truth. So you have an honest and true love for your brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply, from the heart. 1 Peter 1: 22

### **Hope**

Turn all your worries over to him. He cares for you. God always gives you all the grace you need. So you will only have to suffer for a little while. Then God himself will build you up again. He will make you strong and steady. 1 Peter 5: 7, 10

## **Leadership**

Be shepherds of the flock, the believers who are under your care. Serve as their leaders....Do it because you really want to serve....Be examples to the flock....Don't be proud. 1 Peter 5: 2-6

Can you hear the words of Jesus in Peter's letter? At the Last Supper in Luke 22:32, Jesus said, "I have prayed that your faith will not fail. When you have turned back, help your brothers to be strong." Peter did that all his life.

Peter and the other disciples were willing to lose their lives for Jesus. It is believed that Peter died on a cross. Jesus told Peter, "I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." The Apostle John states, "Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God." John 21:18-19 It is believed that all the disciples except John were killed for their faith, along with thousands of other believers. And yet the church grew and grew. Within three hundred years, the whole Roman Empire knew about Jesus.

**Anyone who reads about Peter has to conclude that Peter believed the resurrection of Jesus really happened.**

If the resurrection did not really happen, we Christians are the greatest fools on earth.<sup>5</sup> Thankfully, there is very good historical evidence that the resurrection really happened.

**Please look at the evidence for yourself.**

Peter wrote in his letter something we hope becomes true for you,

Even though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, you believe in him. You are filled with a glorious joy that can't be put into words. 1 Peter 1: 8

---

<sup>5</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15.