

Peter and His Epistles

Lesson 2: Key Questions & Answers

I. Introduction

Peter has been trying to get it right -“explain the parable to us” (Matt.15:15)

II. The first big question: “You don’t want to leave, do you?” (John 6:22-71)

- A. The setting: It is the day after Jesus and Peter walked on water, they are in Capernaum at the synagogue (vs. 22 and 59)
- B. The discussion: food that lasts for eternity (vs. 26-51)
- C. The argument: eating His flesh (vs. 52-59)
- D. Disciples are deserting Jesus (vs. 60-66)

“Finally, the synagogue was entirely emptied, except for the little group of aghast apostles who had been the sorrowful witnesses of the shattering of the Master’s popularity and of the fabric of their private ambitions.” (Meyer, pg. 51)

- E. Jesus asks the twelve a question, Peter answers for them (vs. 67-68)
- F. The response comes in another question: “Lord to whom shall we go?” (It is a plural pronoun with an emphasis...contrasting against those who had just left.) (vs. 68-69)

What were their alternatives? What are ours?

1. You have “words of life”- there isn’t a definite article. Peter is affirm that following Jesus is not according to any trite formula like the Pharisees might use. It is a conviction in the very words spoken by the Son of God
2. “We have believed and have known”- it is a fixed decision, no wavering
“Holy One”- A title not commonly used. Peter uses at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:27) and later on Solomon’s colonnade in Acts 3:14. He seems to be referencing the expression that occurs often in Isaiah (41:14, 43:3, 47:4 and 48:17)
3. There is a kind of “growth” to Peter’s understanding. See Mark 16:4, Luke 24:36-45 and John 20:9.

III. The second big question: “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (vs. 13) “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” (vs. 15) (Matt 16: 13-19). See also Luke 9:18, 21, Mark 8:27-30.

- A. The setting: Jesus needs some privacy for this next lesson for Peter and the apostles. So they travel to Caesarea Philippi, north of the Sea of Galilee at the foot of Mount Hermon (where the Transfiguration will occur). Caesarea Philippi was a very pagan city and the Jews avoided the city itself. The disciples are out in the region.
- B. He did not ask the question to gain any information. He wanted to give the disciples an opportunity to make a confession.
- C. Some believed that Jesus was: John the Baptist (Herod thought so - John 6:14-16), Elijah (see Malachi 4:5), Jeremiah or one of the prophets
- D. Peter’s answer: You are the Messiah! The anointed one!
- E. Jesus pronounces a Rabbinic blessing on Peter...not because of Peter’s great insight, but because he was “listening”/learning at the feet of God.

IV. Now Jesus tells Peter who he is! (Matt 16:18-19) “You are the rock...”

- A. There are basically two positions on this “role” for Peter
 - 1. He is a rather typical disciple who speaks for the others and they in turn represent all believers since then. Peter in this sense is to be seen as a PRIMARY figure in church history, a kind of “first among equals”. (Protestant View)
 - 2. He is a unique figure in church history worthy of being seen in a role of SUPREMACY and in that role has very special and distinct functions. (Catholic View)
- B. The options for understanding the term “Rock”

“petros” (masculine for stone or small rock) vs. “petra” (feminine for a quarry ledge or whole shelf of rock)

Options:

- 1. Peter is the first in a succession of popes
- 2. Peter as one of the pillars of the church (i.e. a kind of foundation) See Eph. 2:20 and Gal. 2:9
- 3. The rock is Peter’s great confession: “You are the son of the living God”

4. That Christ Himself is the rock. There are several Old and New Testament passages that refer to Christ as a stone or rock (Deut. 32:4, II Sam. 22:2, Ps. 61:2, Isa. 8:14, I Cor. 10:4, Acts 4:11). See Matt 21:44 where the stone is Christ Himself.
- C. The “keys of the kingdom” (Notes taken from Theology I- a class at Talbot Seminary)

A key is referred to eight times in the scriptures. It is always a reference to some kind of instrument used to open or gain some access. Occasionally, it also conveys some sense of authority. There are two main views:

1. That this authority was conferred on Peter as the first in a line of Popes
 2. That Peter and the other apostles were given some authority to “admit or exclude from the blessing of God.” Note that in Matt. 18:18 and John 20:23, Christ uses the plural form of the personal pronoun indicating that that authority was not exclusive to Peter alone.
- D. “ Binding and Loosing”

This appears to be a reference to familiar rabbinical canon law. The disciples would have recognized the pattern. “Rabbis would decide the situations to which a certain religious law applied. When a man committed an act, a rabbi could determine whether or not that act was contrary to a law of God. If it was, he would bind the man (prohibit that act and thus declare the man guilty). If it was not a violation, the rabbi would rule that the law did not apply to this case and thus would loose the man as innocent (permit the act).

The disciples were indeed given administrative/disciplinary authority over the early church. Acts 1-they choose a successor to Judas), Acts 6 -they approved deacons, acts 15-they decided what the Gentiles must do and Acts 5-Peter bound Ananias and Sapphire.” (Theology I Notes, pg. 56)

V. So What? Consider how you might answer the two important questions!

Are you leaving too? Who am I?

Both questions need to be answered with a kind personal confession...

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think Peter fully understood his first statement (“we have believed and know...”)? What about his second statement (“you are the Christ”)?
2. In what ways has your knowledge about Christ grown over the years?
3. How would you describe Peter’s role or importance to Christ at this point in his ministry?
4. Do you have a personal confession of faith? Can you describe your faith in Christ in a few short sentences?