

THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST SIMON PETER

All four gospels refer to “the twelve” apostles and each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) list the apostles of Jesus Christ. The term “apostle” literally means “one sent forth” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Each of these twelve special disciples were commissioned as ambassadors for the message of Jesus Christ. In this series of articles we hope to dig a bit deeper into the character of each one of these men.

In every listing of the apostles within the gospels, Simon Peter is always mentioned first (Matthew 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). While “Simon” was his given name, Jesus calls him “Cephas” (an Aramaic word) which is translated “Peter” in Greek. This new name meant “a stone” (John 1:42). While Peter did not always have a rock-like strength before Christ’s resurrection, he did afterwards. Notice the various aspects of Peter’s character that made him a valuable disciple—a rock for Jesus Christ.

First, Peter was accustomed to hard work. When Jesus first spotted Peter “by the Sea of Galilee” he was hard at work casting his net as a fisherman (Matthew 4:18). This was a man used to adversity. He was used to sweat in the hot sun; accustomed to toil as he pulled heavy nets all day long; aware of danger as storms quickly raged across the Sea of Galilee. In many ways, this may have made him keenly qualified to do the Lord’s work. Bringing the gospel to a contrary world was a tough job. It would require standing up to critics, enduring a life of persecution and an awareness of the gospel’s enemies. Maybe Peter’s upbringing qualified him for the job!

Second, Peter was used to teamwork. He worked as a fisherman alongside his brother, Andrew (Matthew 4:18). He was probably used to taking and giving orders and working out problems with Andrew. In some ways, this may have also given him the background to do the Lord’s work.



Third, Peter was not afraid to ask questions. Throughout the gospels, Peter is always very inquisitive and seeks understanding. The rabbis may have thought they knew it all and were difficult to teach. Peter was willing to learn—an important trait for a “disciple.” We see his willingness in his presence. He is at the healing of Jairus’ daughter, at the transfiguration and in Gethsemane with Jesus. His presence suggests his interest. Even further, Peter asks questions about stewardship, forgiveness, defilement and the second coming of Jesus (Luke 12:41; Matt. 18:21; 15:15; Mark 13:3-4). Any person wanting to teach, must first be willing to learn.

Finally, Peter was willing to admit wrong. As Jesus is led away to be tried and crucified, Peter denies Christ (Matthew 26:69-75). Yet, Peter, ashamed of his denial, runs to the empty tomb as the news of Jesus’ resurrection quickly spreads (Luke 24:12). Evidently, Peter’s faith is forever strengthened by news of the resurrection. Fifty days later, he boldly proclaims Christ to the Jews in Acts 2. He refuses to be silenced, as he was before, by the Jewish governing body (Acts 4:13-20). He is the first to teach the Gentiles (Acts 10). Historic tradition claims Peter was crucified upside down as a martyr for Christ.

Looks like Peter, in the end, lived up to his name and became a “rock” for Christ! *Joshua R. Welch*

