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Stand Down and See the End

Peter's Characterization in the Gospels

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Peter's bold, passionate, and zealous personality is readily grasped from the New Testament text. At times Peter's eagerness lands him in trouble as Jesus has to restrain and redirect him. Peter's denial of Christ[1] at the high priest's house is one of the most well-known episodes of the Gospels, but it seems to contradict the portrayal of Peter's zealousness that we grow accustomed to from other Gospel episodes. This paper will examine Peter's denial by applying narrative methodology to the depiction of Peter in the Gospels. While we cannot know exactly what was in Peter's mind that night, we can benefit from closely examining the New Testament text and the interactions between Jesus and Peter leading up to this pivotal moment. Several times Jesus had to tell Peter in effect to "stand down." By the time of the trial at the high priest's residence, Peter was simply following behind to "see the end" (Matthew 26:58). Peter was no longer ready to engage others in defense of his Master, but he still followed to see what would happen (while most of the other Apostles fled from the Garden of Gethsemane and temporarily abandoned their Master). Through the narrative study of earlier episodes, it becomes apparent that Peter often

acted out of fear, ignorance, and impulsiveness—characteristics also revealed in the denial scene.

Narrative approaches, previously common in the field of literature, spread to biblical studies in the 1970s. Although biblical narrative critics commonly focus on the *creation* of the biblical stories, treating them as they would a work of fiction,[2] a narrative approach can still be used from a faith perspective. Rather than focusing so much on the creativity of the author (assuming the author mostly made up the stories), the emphasis can be on the *selection* of material in the portrayal of episodes and characters.[3] The Evangelist John, for example, clearly explains that there were many other stories that could have been told about Jesus, but he selected the ones he did to help the reader or listener come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (see John 20:30–31; 21:25). Thus each Evangelist had a pool of stories from which to select, arrange, shape, and proclaim his witness of Jesus Christ. Each had a different audience which affected the choices he made and the themes he developed. They did not make up these events and characters ex nihilo, but they fashioned powerful stories from either their own experiences or the experiences of others preserved in oral and written sources.

An example of producing a narrative critical study on the figure of Peter in the Gospels was done by Richard J. Cassidy in 2007.[4] Cassidy highlights three major aspects of narrative criticism: (1) analysis of the various elements that serve as building blocks of the overall story, (2) analysis of the literary techniques used by the author to present the narrative in a coherent and engaging way, and (3) investigation of the author's assumptions about the readers [or listeners] of the original audience.[5] One of the primary narrative building blocks alluded to in number one above is characterization (along with plot, time, and setting). This study focuses on the characterization of Peter and how he was portrayed in the various episodes selected by each Gospel writer.

Characterization

Characterization is a term narrative critics use for how a figure is developed through the course of a story. This term seems out of place in the usual devotional reading of scripture, but how the characters are depicted may give us insights into what we should learn from their experiences. Some questions one can ask about the characterization of Peter include details about his personal life, his qualities, his relationship with Jesus, and his development over time. There is a hierarchy in the disclosure of information about characters in the Bible: a ranking of the best sources to learn what a character is thinking or why he or she is acting a certain

way. Robert Alter, a well-known Hebrew Bible narrative scholar, outlined this hierarchy from least to greatest reliability based on who or what is revealing details about characters.

> There is a scale of means, in ascending order of explicitness and certainty, for conveying information about the motives, the attitudes, the moral nature of characters. Character can be revealed [1] through the report of actions; [2] through appearance, [3] gestures, [4] posture, [5] costume; [6] through one character's comments on another; [7] through direct speech by the character; [8] through inward speech, either summarized or quoted as interior monologue; [9] or through statements by the narrator about the attitudes and intentions of the personages, which may come either as flat assertions or motivated explanations.[6]

On the lower end of the scale, the reader must infer things about the figures based on their actions and appearance. In the middle categories, we can weigh the statements from the characters themselves and from others. The top categories are most reliable because we are told the character's own thoughts, and thus motives, or these aspects are revealed by the narrator[7] without leaving it to the reader's inference. In the case of Peter, most of his characterization is in the lower categories—his actions—or on inference from his dialogues with others. Occasionally the narrator will make overt statements about Peter's feelings or thoughts, but unfortunately not about Peter's denial. Thus, when we try to deduce why Peter denied Jesus the night of Jesus' trial, we lack Peter's own explanation and instead rely on interpretation from how this event is portrayed by each Gospel writer. But rather than relying on the interpretation of only this one episode, it may be useful to examine some earlier episodes in the Gospels leading up to the denial to see how Peter is portrayed. In this way, we discover what each Evangelist wants us to learn about him and particularly his relationship with Jesus. To look at the development of the relationship between Jesus and Peter leading up to his denial, we will analyze the characterization of Peter in several Gospel episodes separately and draw comparisons across the Gospels.[8] We will first look at his initial introduction in each Gospel and then at those episodes that reveal characteristics relevant to Peter's denial.

Initial Introduction of Peter

The Gospels are extremely brief in their introduction and description of Peter. What Alter has stated about the Hebrew Bible seems to pertain to the Gospels

as well (and to many other narrative sections of scripture since they are not usual biographies or histories):

> How does the Bible manage to evoke such a sense of depth and complexity in its representation of character with what would seem to be such sparse, even rudimentary means? Biblical narrative offers us, after all, nothing in the way of minute analysis of motive or detailed rendering of mental processes; whatever indications we may be vouchsafed of feeling, attitude, or intention are rather minimal; and we are given only the barest hints about the physical appearance, the tics and gestures, the dress and implements of the characters, the material milieu in which they enact their destinies. In short, all the indicators of nuanced individuality to which the Western literary tradition has accustomed us—preeminently in the novel, but ultimately going back to the Greek epics and romances—would appear to be absent from the Bible.[9]

Yet, despite the lack of details and the inner thoughts and feelings of biblical characters, they have become vivid individuals and models to countless readers over the centuries. The paucity of Peter's background at the beginning of the Gospels is at first surprising, yet consistent with biblical narrative.[10] Peter simply enters the story as if the reader should already know who he is. For example, in the Gospel of Luke, which gives a little more initial information about Peter than the other synoptic Gospels, Simon Peter's first introduction is not focused on him but Jesus going into "Simon's house," where "Simon's wife's mother" was ill with a fever. Those in the house summoned Jesus for her, and he "rebuked the fever; and it left her" (Luke 4:38–39).[11] When Luke then recounts Peter's call to follow Christ, Jesus asks to borrow Simon Peter's boat so he could preach from it to the audience on the shore. The boat is simply identified as "Simon's" without any explanation of who Simon is (see Luke 5:3), similar to the previous healing episode of Peter's mother-in-law in Luke.

When Jesus finishes teaching, he tells Simon to let his nets out in the deep. Simon first explains that they had toiled unsuccessfully all night, "nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). Peter's immediate obedience—despite poor results earlier, but perhaps with some faith from the previous healing of his mother-in-law—is rewarded with a net-breaking multitude of fish. Simon Peter was overwhelmed with the haul and "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. . . . And Jesus said unto Simon,

Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him" (Luke 5:8, 10–11).

Peter's occupation sets up Jesus' call to abandon that livelihood for bringing new spiritual life to others through becoming a fisher of men. But most importantly, Luke's narrative includes miraculous encounters between Jesus and Peter—both in the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and with the abundant catch of fish. Jesus' command to cast down their nets elicits Peter's acknowledgment of him as the Master[12] and his faith in Jesus' word in that Peter would try fishing again. The results led to Peter's acknowledgment of Jesus as "Lord" and a feeling of sinfulness in the presence of the divine. Yet Peter's initial fear is allayed by the Savior's command to "fear not" and his invitation to discipleship.

Matthew and Mark lack a miraculous introduction between Jesus and Peter; they merely state Jesus' invitation to follow him and become a fisher of men and Peter's immediate obedience to that command (see Matthew 4:18–20; Mark 1:16–18).[13] The reader is left wondering what, if any, previous contact Jesus and Peter had such that from a brief invitation, Peter would be willing to give up his livelihood. Similar to Luke, the emphasis is on Peter's immediate obedience to the call of the Master,[14] but the experiential element is left unexplained in Matthew and Mark—what did he feel or know when Jesus summoned him which led him to immediately follow him?

The Gospel of John gives an introduction of Jesus to Peter, but again gives little description of who Peter is. Here Peter first hears about Jesus from his brother Andrew, who had become a follower of John the Baptist. When John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb of God to Andrew and another disciple, they followed after Jesus (see John 1:35–37). Andrew then sought out his brother Peter and announced, "We have found the Messias" (1:41).[15] Andrew then brought Peter to Jesus, "and when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (1:42). Cephas is an Aramaic equivalent of the Greek *Petros*, "rock." The Joseph Smith Translation adds an additional meaning to *Cephas* with Peter and Andrew's response to Jesus' invitation: "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a seer, or a stone. And they were fishermen. And they straightway left all, and followed Jesus" (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:42). Jesus does not explain here *why* he is giving this name to Peter. The other Gospels will begin using the name *Petros* for Simon (or occasionally combined—Simon Peter) but without an explanation of what it means or where it came from except that Jesus gave him the name (e.g., Mark 3:16—"surnamed Peter"; Luke 6:14—"Simon, (whom he also named Peter)"; Matthew 4:18 says

"Simon called Peter" without acknowledging Jesus giving him this name, however, Matthew is the only one to record the actual occasion of Jesus giving the name "Peter" to Simon later on in his Gospel). It may be that Peter's later denial is ironically juxtaposed with his nickname Peter, calling into question Peter's rocklike characteristic.

When comparing the initial introduction of Peter in the four Gospels, we see that Matthew and Mark are the simplest and do not reveal much about Peter except his willingness to follow Jesus' invitation. John includes information on how Peter first learned about Jesus and Jesus' giving of the name Cephas to Peter, but there is little description of Peter except in the Joseph Smith Translation that relates Peter's willingness to leave everything and follow Jesus. Luke certainly is the most revealing of Peter's initial characterization in that he has a miraculous experience with Jesus and progresses from doubt (recounting their unsuccessful fishing efforts), to faith ("nevertheless at thy word"), to fear ("Depart from me; for I am a sinful man"). This progression is a glimpse into Peter's complex characterization, revealed through Peter's own words (no. 7 on scale). On the one hand Peter shows a normal human perspective of doubt and fear, yet on the other hand he manifests tremendous faith.

Ordination of the Twelve—Peter as the Chief Apostle

The synoptic Gospels portray Peter at the time of his ordination as an Apostle. (The Gospel of John omits this episode. In fact, Peter is only mentioned in the Gospel of John in one episode between his call and the Last Supper, that of the Bread of Life sermon). Mark 3:13 describes Jesus going up into a mountain (praying all night according to Luke 6:12) and calling his disciples unto him. From this group, Jesus ordained twelve ("whom also he named apostles"; Luke 6:13) who should be with him so that he might send them forth to preach and have power to heal sicknesses and cast out unclean spirits (see Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14). The names and their ordering are different in each list, but what is consistent is Peter's place at the head of the list, in fact Matthew explicitly states, "the first" (*protos*). From this episode we see the power and authority bestowed upon Peter in his new calling as an Apostle and his placement at the head of the Twelve. This preeminence of Peter will be common in many other group settings.[16] This experience solidifies the beginning of Peter's ministry to follow Christ and to be sent out by him to teach and heal others while being distinguished as a leader among the Twelve.

Walking on Water

The Gospel of Matthew is the only one to share Peter's participation in Jesus' miracle of walking on the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus appeared near the disciples' boat in the middle of the sea, the disciples (including Peter) "were *troubled,* saying, It is a spirit; and they *cried out for fear*" (Matthew 14:26; emphasis added). The last phrase gives insight from the narrator about what the disciples were feeling—fear—and why: they thought it was a spirit walking on the water towards them. After Jesus' reassurance that it was him and they did not need to be afraid, Peter was the only one to ask if he could walk on water too (see Matthew 14:28). "And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (Matthew 14:29). According to the text, Peter was initially successful in walking on the water, but when his attention was diverted to the billowing wind and waves surrounding him, he began to sink: "When he saw the wind boisterous, *he was afraid*; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30; emphasis added). Jesus was there with his stretched forth hand to catch Peter, rescuing him. Jesus then chastised Peter, "O thou of *little faith*, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31; emphasis added). It was as if Jesus were saying, "You were doing it, Peter, why did you start to doubt yourself?"

This incident is a rare example of the narrator revealing Peter's emotion: he was afraid. It also includes Jesus' assessment of Peter as having "little faith." Based on the scale of reliability of the exposition of character given above, we have examples of characterization through other characters' comments (in this case the main character, Jesus) and characterization through the narrator's statement about attitude, and both could be considered negative traits: fearful and lacking faith. Yet these are juxtaposed with Peter's eager personality: a man of action wanting to participate in this incredible miracle rather than merely observing it from a distance. This episode reveals that Peter's faith and understanding still needed further development, but Jesus was there to admonish and instruct him.[17]

Clarification of a Parable

Another episode that reveals Peter's limited understanding was shared next in the Gospel of Matthew. After Jesus taught a parable about the Pharisees, Peter stepped forward and asked Jesus to declare unto the disciples this parable (see Matthew 15:15). Jesus scolded, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" (Matthew 15:16). Still, Jesus proceeded to explain the meaning of the parable to Peter and the others. Luke also records an instance when Peter asked for clarification regarding a parable. After Jesus told the parable of the diligent and lax servants, Peter questioned, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" (Luke 12:41).

Jesus did not reproach Peter; nor did he directly answer his question, but further elaborated on the significance of the parable, especially in the context of the last days. In a similar vein but in reverse order, Matthew records an instance when Peter asked him for clarification about forgiveness, which then led to Jesus teaching through a parable. "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21–22). Jesus then broadened Peter's understanding of forgiveness through the telling of the parable of the unforgiving servant (see Matthew 18:23–35).[18] Thus there were many instances when Peter did not understand Jesus' teachings, and he sought for further clarification, which is understandable considering his role as chief Apostle who presumably would be expected to teach these things to others.

Confession of Faith

Peter next shows up in the synoptic Gospels in an episode that shows the height of his spirituality, but is then followed by a strong rebuke from the Savior.[19] When Jesus asked his Apostles, "Whom do men say that I am?," various answers were given (see Matthew 16:13–14; Mark 8:27–28; Luke 9:18–19). When Jesus asked more specifically, "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15), Peter, taking the lead as spokesman,[20] gave the memorable response "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).[21] In each of the synoptic Gospels, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone about him yet (see Matthew 16:20; Mark 8:30; Luke 9:21), but in Matthew, before he gives this command, he has additional dialogue with Peter.

In Matthew, Jesus first commends Peter for his declaration, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:[22] for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). Then he gives Simon the appellation "Peter" and promises keys of authority: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18–19). Volumes have been written on this passage and its significance in Christianity. For our purposes here, we see that Jesus is playing off of the meaning of Peter's nickname—rock—with a likely reference to himself (the subject of Peter's confession) as the stone or cornerstone of Israel and the church.[23] We also see that Peter will have the authority to bind things here on earth and have it recognized in heaven and he will need to serve as a "rock" for the emerging church. Matthew's inclusion of this additional dialogue

may point towards his purpose in showing a Jewish audience that not only did Jesus have authority as the Messiah, but he passed on this authority to Peter.

Jesus' Prophecy of His Suffering and Death

When Jesus later[24] prophesied that the Son of Man would suffer many things, be rejected by Jewish leaders and killed, but after three days would rise again (see Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22), Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matthew 16:22; see also Mark 8:32). Peter's actions (ranked lowest in scale of characterization above) and dialogue (ranked high, no. 7, in scale) are very forceful for a disciple to a master and again disclose Peter's impulsive nature and lack of understanding of Jesus' true purpose (a sacrificial Messiah).[25] The Greek word translated "rebuke" here and everywhere else in the New Testament is ἐπιτιμάω (*epitimaō*).[26] It is used in many situations such as to describe Jesus rebuking storms and evil spirits (see Matthew 8:26; 17:18), the Apostles rebuking people bringing children to Jesus (see Matthew 19:13), the multitude rebuking a blind man calling after Jesus (see Matthew 20:31), and one thief rebuking the other while hanging on a cross (see Luke 23:40). The Greek term is also used in some situations without a negative connotation of reprimanding someone, but where Jesus admonished or charged others not to tell about his messiahship or miracles (see Matthew 12:16; Mark 3:12; Luke 9:21).

After Peter rebuked Jesus, Jesus returned Peter's rebuke, saying, "Get thee behind me,[27] Satan: thou art an offence[28] unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:31–33 has a similar dialogue; curiously Luke does not include Peter's rebuke or, consequently, Jesus' response). The harsh term "Satan" used by Jesus has the meaning of *adversary* and is a strong example of character exposition (no. 6 in scale) by the main character towards Peter;[29] Peter was not fulfilling his call as a witness of Christ, but instead was opposing Jesus' need to fulfill a divine mission of suffering and death.[30] This is the first of several times Jesus announces his impending death only to have Peter try to thwart it presumably out of his love and loyalty for his Master, whom he would not allow to be taken and killed. Jesus' rebuke reminded Peter that Jesus was only following God's plan and that Peter should consider that before his personal feelings or agenda.[31] Peter should rely on revelation from the Father and not his own "flesh and blood" understanding.

Mount of Transfiguration

The Mount of Transfiguration episode affords an opportunity for Jesus to separate Peter, James, and John from the other disciples to participate in a special spiritual

experience.[32] Jesus' invitation to Peter indicates that the earlier episode of rebuke was pardoned and Peter was once again given an opportunity to participate in a choice event, thereby prefiguring Jesus' later exoneration of Peter after his denial.

From a narrative perspective this pericope has some of the greatest differences among the Gospels in the retelling of an experience related to Peter. According to Mark, Peter suggested making three tabernacles because "*he wist not* [did not know] *what to say*; for they were *sore afraid*" (Mark 9:6; emphasis added). This is another rare direct statement from the narrator about Peter's inner feelings (no. 9 in scale)—uncertainty and fear. In Matthew and Luke, however, the fear resulted from the next stage of the Apostles' experience as a cloud overshadowed them and they heard the voice of the Father bearing witness of the Son. According to Matthew, "when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were *sore afraid*" (Matthew 17:6; emphasis added).[33] According to Luke's account, after the cloud overshadowed them, "they *feared* as they entered into the cloud" (Luke 9:34; emphasis added) and then heard the voice of the Father.[34] So all three Gospels agree that Peter (and James and John) was afraid, but in Mark the cause of fear was the appearance of Elijah and Moses; in Luke it was the cloud that suddenly overshadowed them; and in Matthew it was the voice of the Father.[35] In all three cases, a manifestation of spiritual power was the source of fear similar to earlier episodes discussed above, and that fear was divulged by the narrator.

Rich Young Man

Following the encounter between Jesus and the rich young man, Jesus told his disciples how hard it was for those that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God (see Matthew 19:23–24; Mark 10:23–25; Luke 18:24–25). The disciples were astonished wondering who would be saved, but Jesus assured them that with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:25–26; Mark 10:26–27; Luke 18:26–27). Peter then remarked, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matthew 19:27; Mark and Luke are very similar: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee"—Mark 10:28; see also Luke 18:28). Jesus acknowledges Peter's sacrifice and says that anyone who has given up family and possession for the gospel's sake will be blessed an hundredfold now ("manifold" in Luke) and shall obtain eternal life in the world to come (Mark 10:29–30). Matthew also adds an additional future blessing for the Twelve: after the Second Coming, they will "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28), another instance of Matthew focusing on the authority of Peter and the other Apostles. But according to the Joseph Smith Translation in Mark, Peter's eagerness to vocalize his sacrifice is met with a rebuke from Jesus: "But

there are many who make themselves first that shall be last; and the last first. *This he said rebuking Peter*" (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 10:31–32; emphasis added). This clarification by Joseph Smith is a narrator's statement (no. 9 in scale) giving the motive behind Jesus' dialogue with Peter.[36] This is another example of Jesus correcting Peter about his misunderstanding of the gospel and specifically in this case of the need for humility in leading others.

Washing of Feet

John is the only Gospel that includes the report of Jesus washing the feet of the Apostles. When Jesus came to Peter, Peter questioned why Jesus, the Master, should be doing this menial task. Jesus replied, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7), indicating another instance when Peter did not yet understand Jesus' purpose. Peter continues his protest in a dialogue with the Savior, "Thou needest not to wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (Joseph Smith Translation, John 13:8). Then Peter, to declare his loyal discipleship and desire to remain with Jesus, swings completely in the other direction, requesting his entire body be washed: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (John 13:9). Jesus reassures him that this foot washing would be sufficient and pronounces the group clean (except Judas). Peter's tendency to speak first and understand later is yet again exposed, this time through his speech and Jesus' responses (nos. 6 and 7).

Jesus' Prediction of Peter's Denial

All four Gospels contain Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial, although there are some differences in each Gospel leading up to it. Matthew and Mark closely parallel each other as they describe Jesus and his Apostles walking toward the Mount of Olives after the Last Supper. As they proceeded, Jesus told them, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark 14:27–28; see also Matthew 26:31–32). Peter disagreed, saying, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Mark 14:29; see also Matthew 26:33), seemingly setting himself up as stronger or more loyal than the others. Perhaps to humble his chief Apostle, Jesus prophesied that even that night before the rooster would crow twice, Peter would deny him three times (see Mark 14:30; Matthew 26:34). "But [Peter] spake the *more vehemently*, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all" (Mark 14:31; emphasis added; see also Matthew 26:35).[37] Mark includes this slight description by the narrator (no. 9) of Peter's second response—more vehemently—which bluntly reveals that Peter's objection is

growing stronger. Peter is also taking the lead among the other ten Apostles present to be the first to refuse Jesus' prediction and is revealing a strong sense of loyalty by twice using the pronoun "thee" in his vehement response. The ten Apostles all interpret Jesus' statement as saying they lack commitment, but Peter places himself as the "chief" Apostle in loyalty to Jesus. However, he again reveals his ignorance of Christ's true mission and of his own actions in the face of the impending opposition. Peter will be severely humbled before the next dawn.

In Luke and John, the dialogue is between Jesus and Peter instead of to the broader group of Apostles, despite their presence in the same setting. At the end of the Last Supper and the institution of the sacrament in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus directly addresses Peter: "Simon, Simon,[38] behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31–32). Jesus' point-blank warning about Satan's intention must have been shocking, but he immediately followed it up with reassurance that he had prayed for Peter's welfare (the only time in Luke that Jesus prays as an intercessor for an individual). Jesus' concluding statement, "when thou art converted," implies that Peter's full conversion is still a future experience; so he still has more to learn and develop. When Peter then declared, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33), Jesus instead predicted his denial.[39] Conspicuously, Peter gives no response to Jesus' prediction in Luke. Despite Peter's earlier claim of commitment, his denials will reveal that he is not yet ready to fully go with Christ (but later in his ministry he will be ready to face many prisons and even death).

John's dialogue begins with Peter's question about Jesus' earlier statement "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you" (John 13:33). Peter queried where the Lord was going. Jesus responded, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards" (John 13:36). Note the presence of both a proximate following ("canst not follow me *now*") and a future following ("shalt follow me *afterwards*"). In the short term, Peter will be unable to follow Jesus to his death, but he will later follow Christ to his own death as a martyr, foreshadowing Jesus' later prophecy for Peter in John 21:22 discussed below.[40] Peter would not let it end at that but asked and proclaimed, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake" (John 13:37).[41] Jesus' response cast some doubt on Peter's awareness and led to Jesus' piercing prediction of Peter's proximate denial: "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:38).

Despite having three different versions of Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial (Matthew and Mark seem to be sharing the same version), they all contain the same narrative elements: (1) Jesus' statement regarding the future; (2) Peter's rejection of Jesus' statement and proclamation of his enduring loyalty; and (3) Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial that night. Thus, in all cases, Peter's brash, overconfident rejoinder reveals his ignorance of Jesus' mission and his own capability and sets up Jesus' foreknowledge of how Peter will react later that night. One significant difference among the Gospel accounts is that Peter continues protesting against Jesus' prediction in Matthew and Mark, but any response to Jesus' prediction is absent in the other two Gospels.

Garden of Gethsemane

Shortly after Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial, they arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus began to feel sorrowful and very heavy (Matthew 26:37). The Joseph Smith Translation in Mark makes an interesting change to the text here, putting some of the emotions on the Apostles, not on Jesus:

> And the disciples began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and to complain in their hearts, wondering if this be the Messiah.
>
> And Jesus knowing their hearts, said to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.
>
> And he taketh with him, Peter, and James, and John, and rebuked them, and said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch. (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:36–38)

Like elsewhere, Peter, James, and John are separated from the others, but here to receive a rebuke because of the complaining feelings wondering if Jesus was the Messiah. It is not clear in the text which of the disciples had this doubtful attitude towards Jesus' messiahship, but perhaps Jesus rebuked these three Apostles because they were considered the leaders of the others and either did not understand Jesus' mission themselves or had not taught the others sufficiently. Following his prayer to the Father, Jesus came and found them sleeping and said to Peter, "Simon,[42] sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?" (Mark 14:37; see also Matthew 26:40). It is not clear why Peter was singled out here, perhaps because of his leadership status or in response to his strong declaration of loyalty in the preceding episode that already seems to be eroding here in the garden with his lack of watching out for Jesus. Jesus encouraged them to

watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation, and then he returned to pray more to the Father (Luke does not record multiple prayers; see Luke 22:46). After returning, Jesus found them sleeping again and the narrator explains why (no. 9): their eyes were heavy (see Matthew 26:43; Mark 14:40).[43] The narrator in Mark also adds that they did not know what to say to Jesus after he found them sleeping the second time (see Mark 14:40). Jesus prayed a third time and then told them they could sleep on (see Matthew 26:45; Mark 14:41).[44] This episode includes some censure from the Savior for his three chief Apostles and their fatigue from everything they had been experiencing. Peter is also the point person in Matthew and Mark for Jesus' questions. Despite Peter's earlier protestations that he would do anything for the Savior, even die for him, he cannot stay awake and watch for Christ now.

Jesus' Arrest

When Judas came with armed officers to betray Jesus, Peter tried to intervene (although only the Gospel of John identifies him by name). As recorded in all four Gospels, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest (see Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; John 18:10). In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus essentially tells Peter to stand down. "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:52–54).[45] Even in this intensely charged moment, Jesus is teaching his chief Apostle the divine nature of his mission and that if it did not need to happen this way, he could call down heavenly forces to protect himself. Similarly, John records Jesus' admonition to Peter to allow him to fulfill his mission: "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). In Luke, Jesus simply said, "Suffer ye thus far" and healed the injured man's ear (Luke 22:51). (The Gospel of Mark omits any healing of the severed ear or any reaction to Peter's rash action). In this moment, even with armed soldiers around him, Peter had no qualms about fighting to defend his Master, but Jesus had to restrain his ardent Apostle and teach about the higher purpose for which he was there.

As they dragged Jesus away, all four Gospels single out Peter as following the group to the high priest's house (John includes another unnamed disciple who was able to gain them access into the high priest's complex—John 18:15–16). In Matthew, it gives the plain motive for Peter's actions—"to see the end" (Matthew 26:58). All of Jesus' other followers scattered like sheep from the Garden of

Gethsemane upon Jesus' arrest, but Peter remained to mutely witness what would come next in his Master's mission.

Peter's Denial

At the courtyard of the high priest's palace, Peter remained outside among servants and officers and warmed himself at the fire. As the trial of Jesus proceeded inside the palace of the high priest, Peter was approached consecutively by three people claiming that he was with Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel of John identifies the first accuser as the person watching the gate and letting Peter gain entrance into the complex before he warms himself by the fire. The third accuser is specifically identified as a kinsman of the high priest's servant, Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off in the Garden of Gethsemane (see John 18:26), a justifiable reason for Peter fearing for his life as retribution for his actions in the garden.[46] Mark's account captures the rising emotion that built up inside Peter:

> And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.
>
> But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.
>
> And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.
>
> And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.
>
> But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.
>
> And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept. (Mark 14:67–72)

The charge of being "with Jesus" echoes earlier Markan texts, including Peter's former willingness to die "with Jesus" (14:31). But now Peter is denying being "with Jesus." By the third denial, Peter has reached the low point of his discipleship. "Only a few hours earlier he proclaimed his willingness to die with Jesus. Now he affirms that he has no ties with Jesus. He does not even know him!"[47] Reflecting back on Jesus' words in Mark 8:34–38 when Jesus referred to Peter as Satan, Jesus counseled that any who would come after him should deny himself

and take up his cross. In this instance, Peter did not deny himself to follow Christ, but he denied knowing Jesus; haunting last words for Peter in each of the synoptic Gospels. Luke adds a poignant aspect to Peter's denial—a brief mention of the Savior's presence at the scene as "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61). Then Peter remembered Jesus' prediction and "went out, and wept *bitterly*" (Luke 22:62; emphasis added). The narrator's use of the adjective *bitterly* (no. 9; found also in Matthew 26:75) provides a subtle glimpse into Peter's horror and sorrow when he realized he had fulfilled Jesus' prediction of his denial. It also is likely an indication that Peter has begun the repentance process for his denials. Because Peter's internal thought is not revealed in this episode, nor does the narrator explicate why Peter acted the way he did (the narrator only described his rising emotions during the denials and his sorrowful feelings afterwards), a close narrative examination does not disclose exactly why Peter denied knowing Jesus. However, we can compare his actions in this moment with how he was portrayed in earlier episodes to try to draw some conclusions.

Conclusions

This narrative study of Peter leading up to the denial is not meant to criticize him nor condemn him as a failure. Instead, it is to remind us that Peter was mortal and as such had fears and made mistakes, but also grew, developed, and accomplished great things. He was not so high above other mortals that we cannot possibly relate to him. It is refreshing and inspiring that he seems more normal and more like us in our uncertain and often unsteady walk through life. It is this eager, yet often misguided, Apostle that the Gospel writers want us to examine and relate to. Thus a narrative presentation helps uncover the facets of Peter's characterization that can instruct us along our own paths of discipleship.

Despite the Gospels' brevity of description about Peter, a many-sided picture of Peter emerges from their portrayals of him in various settings. Despite a relatively humble background, he became recognized as the chief Apostle by Jesus, outsiders, and the Gospel writers. Peter came to learn through faith, miraculous events, and revelation that Jesus was the very Christ and the Son of God. Yet Peter, like the other disciples, was slow to grasp the divine purpose of Jesus' mission of suffering and death, so he continually proclaimed his eagerness to protect Jesus at all costs, even sacrificing his own life if necessary. Perhaps Peter thought he knew Jesus' mission better—something akin to Jewish messianic views of a triumphant, world-changing Messiah—not a Messiah handed over to human hands for punishment and death.[48] Peter's impetuous actions and his tendency to speak before understanding are consistent across the Gospels. Consequently,

Jesus needed to continually rebuke, refine, and rein him in. By the time of Jesus' trial, it seems Peter was resigned to the fact that Jesus must suffer, so he followed along to see the end.[49]

While one may think that Peter would be courageous in any setting, as demonstrated in the Garden of Gethsemane and in his rebukes of his Master, the narrator of each Gospel reveals moments when Peter was afraid and unsure of what to do. In fact, before Peter's denial the only descriptions by narrators about Peter's feelings and emotions were fear and uncertainty.[50] In addition, Jesus' reprimands included statements of Peter's lack of faith and understanding, a high level of exposition about a character from the main character in the narrative. Could not these characteristics have carried over to the pivotal moments of accusation—"thou art one of them"—and led him to his three denials? Between knowing that Jesus did not want him to prevent what was happening, and Peter's fear and uncertainty of what to say in some circumstances, Peter denied. Upon recognition of his weakness, Peter wept bitterly.

When briefly comparing the portrayal of Peter in each of the Gospels, a few insights can be gleaned. First, despite having four different accounts of Peter in the four Gospels, they are remarkably similar in their characterization of the chief Apostle: very powerful and positive at moments, then shockingly candid and critical in the next moment.[51] Even within unique episodes of a Gospel or in the Gospel of John, which includes very little about Peter during Jesus' ministry, similar characterization of Peter is portrayed. However, despite having these shared elements, Luke consistently softens the treatment of Peter. For example, in Luke, Peter did not rebuke his Master, nor was he called "Satan." In the prediction of Jesus' denial, Luke moderates the exchange by highlighting Satan's role in the initial sifting of the disciples rather than focusing on a character flaw. When Peter denies Christ three times, his words are much softer: "I know him not" (22:27); he denied he was one of them (Jesus' Galilean followers) (22:28); and he claimed to not understand the question (22:60). The Gospel of Matthew has some unique incidents related to Peter, probably to emphasize the authority to lead the church being passed down from Jesus to Peter. Mark possibly had the most critical characterization of Peter with its repeated emphasis on Peter's rising emotions and ignorance (twice the narrator explicitly states that Peter did not know what to say in certain situations). If Mark's Gospel was heavily influenced by Peter himself, as traditionally ascribed, then this critical examination of Peter is quite surprising. It may indicate that Peter shared with others that he did not know what to say or do in certain situations, which may have relevance for his actions and speech in the denial episode, and he was very forthright about the emotions he felt in these episodes.

It is also interesting to note how several times the Joseph Smith Translation adds to the characterization of Peter. It begins in the Joseph Smith Translation of John with Peter receiving an invitation to discipleship and with defining Cephas (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:42). It continues in the Joseph Smith Translation of Mark with Jesus rebuking Peter for his self-important statement that he had given up much in following Jesus (see Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 10:31–32). Near the end, the Joseph Smith Translation of Mark adds another rebuke by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane towards Peter (and James and John) for doubting feelings among the Apostles towards Jesus' messiahship (see Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:32–33). The Joseph Smith Translation additions in Mark are consistent with the more critical view of Peter that the Gospel of Mark gives.

If that were the end of the story, it would be a sad ending indeed. But the good news of the gospel brings restoration to Peter as well. Although he "disappears" from the story in the synoptics,[52] John relates a glorious reunion between the Master and his chief Apostle (see John 21). As part of that experience, Peter received the opportunity to redeem his threefold denial with a threefold declaration of his love.[53] Yet, even in this redemptive moment, Peter was grieved because Jesus had to ask him three times if he loved him, and Jesus made an ominous prophecy of Peter's future martyrdom (John 21:17–19).[54] But before that martyrdom would take place, Peter was obedient to Jesus' invitations to follow him[55] and became an indefatigable force for good in the early Christian church; a true shepherd (rather than a fleeing hireling) following in the steps of the Good Shepherd. Peter would love Christ's sheep and willingly give up his life for them.

Whatever one may say about his denial, Peter became a model of one overcoming a failing or weakness to rise to new heights through the strength of the Holy Ghost and a firm commitment to follow Jesus Christ. President Spencer W. Kimball stated: "If we admit that he was cowardly and denied the Lord through timidity, we can still find a great lesson. Has anyone more completely overcome mortal selfishness and weakness? Has anyone repented more sincerely? Peter has been accused of being harsh, indiscreet, impetuous, and fearful. If all these were true, then we still ask, Has any man ever more completely triumphed over his weaknesses?"[56] President Gordon B. Hinckley exhorted, "If there be those throughout the Church who by word or act have denied the faith, I pray that you may draw comfort and resolution from the example of Peter, who, though he had walked daily with Jesus, in an hour of extremity momentarily denied the Lord and also the testimony which he carried in his own heart. But he rose above this and became a mighty defender and a powerful advocate. So, too, there is a way for any person to turn about and add his

or her strength and faith to the strength and faith of others in building the kingdom of God."[57]

We are fortunate that despite our failures, mercy is constantly extended and restoration provided. There are times in life when we can think we know God's plan for ourselves better than he does, so we try to pursue our own agenda. May we learn from Peter's example, who despite imperfections allowed himself to be refined until he ultimately fulfilled the mission given him by the Savior to feed his sheep until the end of his life.

Notes

1. Many have pointed out that Peter did not deny his testimony of Jesus as the Christ, but denied knowing Jesus or his association with Jesus. See, for example, Spencer W. Kimball, "Peter, My Brother," *BYU Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 1971), 3.

2. E.g., Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 25–26.

3. Some scholars use a narrative approach to understand Peter during his own time (versus understanding the Gospel accounts as basically nonhistorical and reflecting a time of composition in the early church). For a helpful review of these works, see Timothy Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels: Pattern, Personality, and Relationship* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 12–17.

4. Richard J. Cassidy, *Four Times Peter: Portrayals of Peter in the Four Gospels and at Philippi* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

5. Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 1.

6. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1981), 116–17. Wiarda uses a similar schema when approaching a characterization study of Peter, but he classifies these elements under two broad categories: direct shaping (the higher numbers in Alter's schema) and indirect shaping (the lower numbers). See *Peter in the Gospels*, 66–68.

7. A note on the use of the term "narrator": Many stories are told by a narrator who moves the story along through descriptions of events, dialogue, and transitions between episodes. Sometimes the narrator is explicitly revealed, such as when the story is told through the eyes and voice of a main character. Often the author plays the role of the narrator. In the case of the Gospels, the four evangelists are the narrators even though they do not identify themselves in the text (the Gospel of John comes the closest when the writer is identified as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" [see John 21:20, 24]). Except in the case of Luke, each evangelist is a "public narrator" addressing a general audience (whether that be Jews, Greeks, or members of the church) rather than a specific individual or an audience at a particular telling. Luke addresses his Gospel to Theophilus—likely an actual person or a general audience of those who love (or want to love) God (Luke 3:3; see also LDS Bible Dictionary, "Theophilus," 785, and Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 3:19–20).

8. Timothy Wiarda also argues for the value of viewing narrative development in episodes across the Gospels because patterns and threads can be observed that probably point to earlier traditions. See *Peter in the Gospels*, 1, 6–8. Cassidy, on the other hand, decided to look at each Gospel individually to determine how Peter's characterization was developed within each particular Gospel irrespective of the other accounts. See *Four Times Peter*, 5. This approach ignores any possible literary dependence among the four Gospels.

9. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114.

10. Cassidy sees the paucity of character development in the Gospels as a result of each Gospel being more plot-driven than interested in developing characters. *Four Times Peter*, 2.

11. Luke has switched the order from Matthew and Mark of this healing episode with Peter's call. In each of the synoptic Gospels, this healing episode lacks any dialogue or action from Peter, but does reveal some facts about him: Peter is married and has a house in Capernaum (living with his brother Andrew).

12. The Greek term here (*epistatēs*) only occurs in the New Testament in the vocative and is unique to Luke. Luke seems to be translating rabbi rather than transcribing it like the other Evangelists.

13. The case of the Gospel of Mark may take on another interesting layer since it is traditionally held that Peter himself is the primary source for much of the material in this Gospel. What did Peter relate about his experiences that were preserved here? It is perhaps also worth noting that it is Jesus who chooses his disciples, and then they decide to follow him, rather than the disciples first choosing to follow Jesus.

14. "Mark's characteristic phrase, 'and immediately,' underscores that Peter accepted Jesus' call without any hesitation." Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 22.

15. In the Gospel of Mark, Peter is the first mortal to identify Jesus as the Christ, but in John it is his brother Andrew (although Andrew is identified in relation to Peter: "Simon Peter's brother").

16. For example, Peter is singled out in Luke's recounting of the healing of the woman with an issue of blood when Jesus asked who touched him out of the multitude and "Peter and they that were with him said . . . " (Luke 8:45). Peter is the only one mentioned and is thus treated as the leader of the group. Very early in Mark, Jesus departed to a solitary place away from the crowds (see Mark 1:35). Simon and others later found Jesus there and told him that everyone was looking for him (1:36–37). What little this tells us about Peter is that he is the only one specifically named among a group following after Jesus. Since Peter is the only named follower in this brief pericope, it may indicate the beginning of his leadership over Jesus' disciples. In another episode (only found in Matthew), outsiders recognized Peter as the leader among Jesus' followers and approached him to ask about his Master's tribute-paying habits. When tax collectors approached Peter in Capernaum and asked him whether his Master paid tribute, Peter replied in the affirmative (see Matthew 17:24–25). When Peter then went to enter the house (presumably his own house), Jesus asked Peter a question about whether royal children or strangers pay custom or tribute, then told Peter to catch a fish which would have a piece of money in its mouth (see Matthew 17:25–27). The story does not relate the fulfillment of this miracle, but Christian tradition presumes it occurred. As such, it is another demonstration of Jesus' miraculous power to Peter and another example of his leadership among the Apostles.

17. Another example of Jesus teaching his Apostles that they need more faith occurred after Jesus cursed the barren fig tree. According to the Gospel of Mark, Peter was the one who first noticed the withering of the fig tree the day after Jesus cursed it (11:21). Jesus' response: "have faith in God" (11:22).

18. Another example of the Apostles, including Peter, approaching Jesus for further insights came after his prophecy about the destruction of the temple. Following Jesus' foretelling that not a single stone of the temple would be left standing on another, Peter was among four of the Apostles who asked Jesus privately when these things would happen (see Mark 13:3). In one instance in the Gospel of John, Peter asks John to question the Lord who it was who was going to betray him (see John 13:24). There's nothing in the text to explain why Peter went through John to ask his question except maybe John's physical proximity to Jesus. In both these cases, there is no reproof from Jesus for lack of understanding.

19. Arlo Nau sees this portrayal as following "a known rhetorical pattern in the ancient world, that of an encomium containing both praise and dispraise. Nau discerns repeated instances in which Peter moves from an action or attitude which can be compared with that of Jesus to one which stands in contrast to Jesus." As quoted in Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels*, 22–23. Wiarda shows an observable pattern of positive intention-reversed expectation where Peter had positive intentions with respect to Jesus, but then those intentions were reversed. See *Peter in the Gospels*, 34–40.

20. Timothy Wiarda spends considerable effort distinguishing between terms like "spokesman," "representative," and "opinion leader." He argues that Peter should be seen as an "opinion leader" in this episode in the Gospel of Mark (the focus of his study) because Mark does not use a spokesman in other episodes with the disciples, and in this one the other disciples are only able to report what others are saying about Jesus (see Mark 8:28), while Peter says the truth (8:29). See "Peter as Peter in the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of New Testament Studies* 45 (1999): 28–29. Cassidy notes the significance of the location of this episode in the Gospel of Mark where many see a two-part division in Mark's Gospel. Part I ends at 8:30 with Jesus' pronouncement and height of popularity among the multitudes. Part II begins at 8:31 and relates Jesus' path to suffering and death; commencing with a prophecy of his impending death (followed by two others in 9:31 and 10:33–34). See *Four Times Peter*, 15–16.

21. Mark gives a shorter form: "thou art the Christ" (8:29); and Luke states, "The Christ of God" (9:20). The Gospel of John includes a similar declaration of faith by Peter, but in a different context: after Jesus gave his Bread of Life discourse. When many of the hearers of that sermon forsook Jesus, Jesus asked the Twelve if they would go away also. Peter again took the lead and answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68–69). Note the use of plural "we," which indicates Peter is not only speaking for himself but for the entire group. They not only believe in Jesus, but are choosing to remain with him because he has the words of eternal life.

22. Jesus' use of Peter's full name, "Simon bar-Jona," sets up the fact that Jesus is about to rename him.

23. *Petros* is the Greek word for Peter, and *Petra* is the "stone" or "bedrock" that Jesus said the church will be built upon. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul uses *Petra* in reference to

Jesus: "for they drank of that spiritual Rock [*Petras*] that followed them: and that Rock [*Petra*] was Christ."

24. It is unclear from the text in Matthew ("from that time forth . . .") how much time expired between Jesus' blessing of Peter and his first prediction of his death. Mark and Luke make it seem that it came immediately after Peter's confession of faith (see Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22).

25. Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 61, "contrasts Peter's answer (by divine revelation and not by 'flesh and blood') in this passage with his response in the next passage when he attempts to dissuade Jesus from following the path to suffering and execution. In the latter passage Peter's answer *is* by 'flesh and blood.'" Cited in Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 138 n. 17.

26. Interestingly, the Gospel of John never uses this term, and Jesus is never described as rebuking anyone in his account. Thanks to Andy Mickelson for noting this fact.

27. Perhaps Jesus' command is a reminder to Peter of his initial call to *follow* Christ.

28. The Greek word *skandalon* can also be translated "stumbling-block;" impeding Jesus to fulfill his mission. Note the irony in the contrast with the "foundation rock" for Jesus' church mentioned in the earlier passage (v. 17).

29. "Formerly he merited the new name of 'Peter.' Now he bears the name of 'Satan.'" From Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 77. "Human beings, allied with Satan, would consider the suffering Son of Man a contradiction to Jesus' role as Messiah. But he has just told the disciples that the Passion and Resurrection of the Son of Man is God's plan. Peter has proven unable to hear that word." Pheme Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 62.

30. It is ironic that Jesus' enemies actually advance Jesus' mission by making him suffer and killing him, while his disciples, especially Peter, try to stop his mission because they do not fully understand the need for Jesus to suffer. "The disciples are 'insiders' who remain 'outsiders' in their understanding." Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*, 57, 76 n. 29.

31. There is nothing in the text to indicate Peter's response or feelings from this upbraiding.

32. This is the second time Jesus has separated out these three Apostles; the earlier episode was when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37—note the purposeful use of "no one" and "except" to separate out these particular Apostles; Luke 8:51; curiously Matthew completely omits the singling out of Peter, James, and John from this episode). In Jairus' daughter's healing, Peter plays only the role as a witness of the miraculous deed.

33. Only Matthew relates how Jesus comforted his fearful Apostles: "Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid" (Matthew 17:7).

34. Luke earlier recorded that initially "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep," similar to their future fatigue in the Garden of Gethsemane, so they saw Jesus' glory after they awoke (Luke 9:32).

35. The aftermath of their experience on the mount also differs among the three Gospels. After the divine manifestation, Matthew and Mark relate that Jesus "charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9; see also Matthew 17:9). Luke omits the charge from the

Savior to not share the experience, but states that the three Apostles "kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen" (Luke 9:36). Mark and Matthew then add some details about their questions related to that experience, which led to further questions about Elias and Christ's coming: "They kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean" (Mark 9:10). Peter was thus commanded in Matthew and Mark to refrain from sharing anything from this very powerful experience until after the Resurrection, a promise he kept (he later shared his feelings about it in 2 Peter 1:16–18). This experience also led to further questioning as Peter and his two companions tried to understand more about Jesus' mission and figures related to it.

36. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus expanded on the statement"the first shall be last and the last shall be first" by giving the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which was another occasion when Jesus used a parable to teach Peter (and the other Apostles) more about a principle (see Matthew 20:1–16).

37. Richard Cassidy sees Peter's response as "the moment of Peter's highest standing within the Gospel narrative. He is now so personally committed in his allegiance to Jesus that he will readily die '*with you*.'" *Four Times Peter*, 30. Peter also tacitly accepts the possibility of Jesus' future death by no longer disputing Jesus' prediction of his death.

38. "At other places in Luke's Gospel in which he repeats the name of the addressee, Jesus' usage implies a degree of solicitude or compassion for the person or entity to whom he speaks." Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 51.

39. Jesus addresses Peter for the only time in the Gospel of Luke as "Peter" in this prediction of his denials. Jesus' earlier exhortation to Peter to "strengthen thy brethren" may be the reason for using this name at this time. There would be a future need for Peter's rock-solid assistance to the other disciples (which may have come as early as Luke 24:34, when Peter and others could bear witness that the Lord had risen because he had appeared to Simon). "Given the phenomenon of Peter's denials, there may also be a dimension of irony in Jesus' use of this name. In the events that will immediately unfold Peter will not be able to live up to his name: he will not be a 'rock' when he denies Jesus three times. Nevertheless, even though Peter's behavior in the next hours will be decidedly 'unrocklike,' Jesus still looks to a future in which Peter's renewed strength will enable him to be a source of strength for others." Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 51.

40. See Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 98.

41. "Peter will die 'for' Jesus not merely 'with' him as in Luke 22:33. The reader of the Fourth Gospel knows that Jesus is the shepherd who lays down his life 'for' the sheep (10:15)." Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*, 106 n. 56.

42. It is noteworthy that once Simon is named "Peter" by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark (3:16), Jesus always refers to him by Peter until this episode. "Jesus seemingly underscores Simon's failure by electing not to address him with the 'disciple's name' (Peter) he earlier bestowed on him." "Peter's behavior is far from 'rocklike.'" Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 21, 23.

43. Luke later on says they were sleeping because "they were filled with sorrow"—Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 22:45.

44. The three failed attempts at watching out for Jesus "can be regarded as a narrative anticipation of the far more serious three denials that are still to come. In reporting this sequence, at 26:43b, Matthew offers the slightly exculpatory comment: 'for their eyes

were heavy.' There will be no such exonerating reference when Peter makes his denials." Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 80.

45. This sentiment is also behind Jesus' later statement to Pilate in John 18:36 when he stated that if his kingdom were of this world, then his disciples would fight, but since it is not, they do not need to fight.

46. Cassidy sees a literary parallel between Jesus' Good Shepherd identification (see John 10) and the denial scene. The same Greek word is used for both the "sheepfold" and "the courtyard," enclosed spaces accessible through a guarded gate. Instead of Jesus' I Am identification, Peter responds to his accusers, "I am *not*." *Four Times Peter*, 100. Peter's actions are like the hireling fleeing from the Good Shepherd's sheep when he sees danger approaching.

47. Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 31.

48. See Frank F. Judd Jr., "The Parables of Matthew 13: Revealing and Concealing the Kingdom of God," in *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ, Volume 2: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 88–94.

49. See Kimball, "Peter, My Brother," 4.

50. It is interesting that the Joseph Smith Translation follows two of the narrator's tendencies in the Gospels in relation to Peter: descriptions of Peter's emotions of fear and uncertainty and Jesus' rebuking of Peter.

51. Note Wiarda's assessment: "A remarkable consistency of characterization across four streams of gospel tradition is to be observed." In *Peter in the Gospels*, 119.

52. Matthew makes no mention of Peter after his denial. Mark makes brief mention of him in the invitation by the angels to the women to tell Peter and the disciples that Jesus is going before them to Galilee (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 16:7). When the women's message was delivered to Peter, it must have been a relief for Peter to know the Savior was willing to see him even after his denial. Luke mentions a post-Resurrection appearance to Peter without any details of that encounter (see Luke 24:34). The post-Resurrection reunion between Jesus and Peter alluded to by Mark and Luke indicates Jesus' willingness to pardon Peter for his denials. Peter was *with Jesus* once again.

53. Another narrative link between these two episodes is the use of the Greek word *anthrakia* (charcoal fire), which is only found in the New Testament in these two settings. Another parallel is "in that previous scene Peter faced a threefold interrogation *about Jesus*. Now he faces a threefold interrogation *by Jesus*. In both cases, it is Peter's *relationship* to Jesus that is at issue." See Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 103.

54. Compare with Jesus' earlier prophecy that Peter would follow in his steps to martyrdom (see John 13:36).

55. The risen Lord twice reinvited Peter to follow him on the shores of the Sea of Galilee (see John 21:19, 22).

56. Kimball, "Peter, My Brother," 2.

57. "And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly," *Ensign*, March 1995, 6.