

“Whom Say Ye That I Am?”

PETER’S WITNESS OF CHRIST

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The Apostle Peter is beloved by believers—perhaps because he seems so authentic and approachable to us. We can understand him. We can empathize with him. We admire his courage as he forsook all, “straightway” leaving his nets as the Master beckoned, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18–20; see also Luke 5:1–11). We understand his confusion over the meaning and message of parables (see Matthew 15:15–16). We feel the desperation in his cry, “Lord, save me,” as his feet and faith faltered on the turbulent waters that night on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:22–33). We appreciate his awe at the Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–13; Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–36). We weep with him for the shame of his thrice-made denial (see Matthew 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62; John 18:15–27), grieve with him at Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:36–46; Mark 33–37), and join in his joy and wonder at the empty tomb (see John 20:1–10).

Perhaps the Gospel writers want us to make this personal connection with Peter. In their accounts they appear to purposely preserve more of his experiences and conversations with Jesus than with any of the other original Twelve.¹ Many of us assume that so much attention is given to Peter in the Gospels because he

became the spokesman and chief among the Apostles. But perhaps Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John also speak so often and intimately of Peter's association with Christ because they hoped that as we come to love and understand Peter, we will be more ready and able to accept his special witness of Christ—a testimony that he seems to have been carefully prepared to bear.

Peter's Preparation

As Peter accompanied Jesus through his mortal ministry, the Apostle's witness and testimony that the Master was the Messiah seems to have been acquired through the intellectual, practical, and revelatory experiences afforded him. That is to say his testimony, like ours today, came through his head, his hands, and his heart.

Reason alone could have provided ample intellectual evidence to Peter that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a mere man, for if he were an imposter, if he were not the very Messiah, how then could he give sight to the blind, cleanse the leper, cause the lame to walk, or raise the dead (see Matthew 11:4–5; see also John 2:11; 10:25; 20:30–31)?

His logical affirmation that Jesus was the Christ would have been regularly bolstered by what he learned as he acted upon the Master's directions. He learned that if he cast his net as the Savior directed, he would gather a great multitude of fishes (see Luke 5:1–9; John 21:5–7), that if he stepped forward with faith when the Savior bid him “come,” he too could walk on water (Matthew 14:22–33), and that if he passed the meager loaves and fishes to the multitude as the Savior instructed, the miracle of multiplication would happen under his very hands (see John 6:1–14).

Those witnesses to his head and his hands would have significantly supplemented the most powerful witness provided Peter—the witness revealed to his heart. Jesus helped the humble fisherman recognize the source of that witness. As he questioned his disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matthew 16:13), they rehearsed the common conclusions of their contemporaries. “Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias [Elijah]; and others, Jeremias [Jeremiah], or one of the prophets” (16:14). Personalizing the query, the Savior then asked, “But whom say ye that I am?” (16:15). Without hesitation, Peter avowed, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (16:16–17). The Savior may have been employing an instructive play on words by using Peter's full Aramaic name on that occasion. “Simon Bar-jona” means “Simon son of Jona” or “Simon

begotten of Jona.” Jona can be understood to be the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name “Jonah” and appears to be the actual name of Peter’s father. In Hebrew, the word “Jonah” literally means a dove.² Thus, in using the name Bar-jona, Christ may have been not only speaking of Peter’s biological parentage but also further explaining how his testimony had been conceived—not revealed through “flesh and blood,” but through the Spirit of God, born of the dove, the very sign in which the Spirit of God descended at Jesus’ baptism (see Matthew 3:13–17).³

On another occasion, Peter bore a similar Spirit-inspired testimony. Many who had followed Christ were confused, shocked, and even offended by his bread of life sermon given at the synagogue in Capernaum (see John 6:48–65). John records that “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (6:66). Testing the depth of their conviction, Jesus there turned to the Twelve and asked, “Will ye also go away?” (6:67). Speaking for all, Peter faithfully reasoned, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (6:68–69).

Peter’s preparation to be a special witness of Christ included several somewhat private experiences with Jesus. Only he and one other disciple, likely John, followed the multitude taking the Savior from Gethsemane to Caiaphas’s palace so that they might witness and know what would happen to the Master (see Matthew 26:58; Mark 14:15; Luke 22:54; John 18:15).⁴ With James and John alone he was brought by the Savior to witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead (see Luke 8:49–56; Mark 5:35–43) and to the Mount of Transfiguration, there to receive special priesthood power and keys (see Matthew 17:1–13; Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–36).⁵ These same three Apostles were asked to “watch with” Jesus as he bore the atoning sorrow and suffering at Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:36–46; see also Mark 14:33–37). In answer to their questions, the three, joined by Andrew, also received privileged instruction from Jesus concerning the signs that would precede the Second Coming (see Mark 13:1–37).

Peter’s testimony was often informed by such personalized counsel and direction when he approached the Savior with questions or whenever Christ perceived this Apostle needed further training. When Peter asked how often he should forgive his brother, Christ taught him that there should be no limit to our forgiveness of others, and that as we forgive, we can expect to be forgiven (see Matthew 18:21–35).⁶ When he asked Jesus what reward he could expect for faithfully following him, the Savior promised him a great reward but then told the parable of the laborers hired throughout the day, in part perhaps to help the Apostle understand that he should focus more on the privilege of laboring for the Master than on the reward, lest he end up offended or disappointed (see Matthew 19:27–20:26).⁷

When Peter asked if the parable of the well-prepared servants was meant just for the disciples or all, Jesus taught him that anyone wishing to be a servant of the Master should be ever prepared for his coming (see Luke 12:31–49).⁸ Once, recognizing a lack of understanding in the disciple, Jesus taught Peter that as the Son of God he was not obligated to pay the annual tribute to the temple collected to maintain his Father’s house, but lest they offend those who likewise lacked understanding, he had Peter catch the fish carrying the coin (see Matthew 17:24–27).⁹ At the Last Supper when Peter protested the Savior’s condescending to wash his feet, he learned of the cleansing power of the ordinance and then willingly offered his all to the Master’s will (see John 13:6–19).

Although Peter’s witness of Christ grew as he accompanied Jesus day by day through his ministry, the disciple seems to have struggled to comprehend the fullness of the Messiah’s mortal mission of which he was to be a witness. Near the end of his ministry, Christ attempted to help the disciples understand the sacrifice he was to make, clearly warning that “the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). Peter panicked at the thought of Jesus being killed and tried to dissuade him, for which he received a not-too-gentle rebuke from the Master: “Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God” (Mark 8:32–33). Peter was perhaps the most reprimanded of all Christ’s disciples. The Savior chided Peter for doubting as he rescued him while walking on the water (see Matthew 14:31), reproved Peter for not understanding the meaning of a parable (see Matthew 15:15–16), assured Peter he was not as strong as he professed when he claimed he would never be offended (see Matthew 26:33–34; Mark 14:29–30; Luke 22:33–34; John 13:36–38), upbraided him for succumbing to sleep at Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:40), and scolded him for smiting off the ear of the high priest’s servant (see John 18:10–11). Remarkably, in spite of the regular reprimands he received from Jesus, Peter chose not to be affronted, but rather continued following the Master, daily adding to his witness and learning of him.¹⁰

Peter’s preparation to be a special witness of Christ neared completion through what he saw, felt, and experienced during the final days of Jesus’ life. During those last days, he would have seen Lazarus raised from the dead (see John 11:1–46). He also would have joined in the celebration of the triumphal entry (see Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–40; John 12:12–19). He was sent to prepare the Passover and received the sacred ordinances, teachings, and commandments given at that Last Supper (see Matthew 26:17–35; Mark 14:12–25; Luke 22:7–38; John 13–17). He felt some of Gethsemane’s sorrow, stood

by Christ at the arrest, and followed him to the trial (see Matthew 26:36–75; Mark 14:32–72; Luke 22:40–62; John 18:1–27).

The Galilean fisherman’s preparation culminated in what he witnessed following the Crucifixion, beginning on the morning of the first day of the week. Upon hearing of the empty tomb, Peter rushed to see for himself and left “wondering in himself at that which was come to pass” (Luke 24:1–12; see also John 20:1–9).¹¹ Luke records that sometime that same day the resurrected Savior appeared privately to Peter, though we know little of that event (see Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8).¹² Later that evening, when Peter with the other Apostles and some disciples were met in a closed room, the risen Lord appeared unto them all. To allay their fears and to affirm the reality of the Resurrection of his tangible body, he invited them to feel the wounds in his body and ate with them. He then opened their understanding of how his Resurrection fulfilled the prophecies written in the law of Moses and the scriptures, declaring, “Ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:36–48; see also Mark 16:14; John 20:19–23).¹³ The eleven disciples later traveled to Galilee, as the Savior had instructed them, and there on “a mountain where Jesus had appointed them,” he assured them, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:7, 10, 16–20).

Through it all, Peter’s head, hands, and heart were further tutored to be a witness of the resurrected Christ, for he saw the risen Lord with his eyes, heard him with his ears, felt him with his hands, and surely, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, felt again the Spirit’s confirmation in his heart (see Luke 24:13–32).

Peter’s Commission

Just as it took time, teaching, and experience for Peter to fully understand the atoning mission of the Messiah, comprehending his mission as a special witness of Christ was a gradual process. When Jesus first called Peter and his brother Andrew from their nets, he clearly communicated his plans to make them “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18–20; see also Luke 5:1–11). Later, when Peter and the other eleven were selected to be special witnesses, Jesus gave them power to minister and perform miracles and sent them forth to declare that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:1–42). Yet after all this, and indeed after having followed Jesus throughout his three-year ministry, the Savior perceived that his chief Apostle still needed help in understanding his calling. In the solemn chamber of the upper room, shortly before descending to the agony of Gethsemane, Jesus warned, assured, and commanded Peter, “Simon, Simon, 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).¹⁴

It seems the full realization of what was to be required of him came to Peter as the Lord taught him on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Peter and some of the other Apostles had traveled to Galilee, surely with the memory of having twice felt the wounds of crucifixion on the resurrected body of their Master fresh on their minds.¹⁵ Apparently still wondering what to do with themselves, Peter announced to his brethren, "I go a fishing" (John 21:3). He had been a fisherman before forsaking his nets to follow Christ, but now that Jesus was no longer with them, Peter seemed resigned to returning to his old life and livelihood. His brethren followed.

Toiling through the night, they caught nothing. Nearing the shore, likely exhausted and discouraged, they saw someone standing there whom they did not recognize bidding them to cast their nets again. Perhaps recalling an earlier occasion when obedience to similar advice had yielded a great catch, they complied, this time without protest or question (see John 21:3-6; Luke 5:1-9). As they drew in their nets teeming once again with a multitude of fish, recognition came to John. "It is the Lord," he exclaimed to Peter (John 21:7). Too anxious to wait for the boat to reach the shore, Peter "cast himself into the sea" to reach the Master sooner (John 21:7). When the others arrived, they found a meal of fish and bread awaiting them. As they dined with Jesus, John reminisced, "And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord" (John 21:12-13).

Following the meal, Jesus turned to Peter and, most likely pointing to the very fish Peter had chosen to pursue, asked of his Apostle, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15).¹⁶ Surely Peter thought this question strange. Of course he loved the Savior more than fish—or fishing. Perhaps there was a touch of incredulity in his answer to such an absurd question. "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee," to which Christ responded, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). Again the Savior put the question to Peter, and Peter again avowed his love for Christ, and Christ again commanded, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:16). Peter was grieved as Jesus asked a third time for the disciple to affirm his love. We can feel the pathos and passion in Peter's third witness, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17). Once again Jesus commanded, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17).¹⁷ How could the message to Peter be any clearer? If he truly loved the Lord, then Peter was no longer to be a fisherman, but rather a shepherd, caring for the Master's flock.¹⁸ Peter's actions and ministry from that time forward affirm that he at last understood his commission and mission to be a special servant and witness of Christ.¹⁹

Peter's Witness

Following that day in Galilee, Peter went forth to fulfill his commission from Christ with remarkable faith, courage, and rigor. As a leading Apostle, he stepped forward to conduct and preside over the first order of business in the young church, that of replacing Judas. As he described the credentials the first new Apostle was to have, Peter made it clear that he must be one who had a witness of Christ, from the Savior's baptism even through to his Resurrection (see Acts 1:15–26). When Phillip had successfully taken the gospel to Samaria, Peter took John with him to give, by the laying on of hands, the gift of Holy Ghost to the new converts there, and subsequently to discipline and correct the misunderstanding of Simon the sorcerer (see Acts 8:14–25). As the lead Apostle, Peter later received the revelation that opened the door for the gospel to be taken to the Gentiles, and he initiated the work by teaching and baptizing the household of Cornelius (see Acts 10). It was subsequently his duty and privilege to declare and explain to his brethren in Jerusalem that “God [hath] also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:1–18). Earlier he had presided over the trial of Ananias and Sapphira (see Acts 5:1–11), and later he led out in the Jerusalem council that met to discuss what was to be expected of Gentile converts (see Acts 15:6–22).

While being occupied with these duties and likely many others not recorded in Acts, Peter did not neglect his responsibility to ever be a witness of Christ. On the day of Pentecost, when thousands had assembled to witness the wonders of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and began speculating, “What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:12), Peter seized upon the moment to teach of Christ (see Acts 2:1–40). Lifting his voice to the curious crowd, he declared that the outpouring of spiritual manifestations they were witnessing was a fulfillment of “that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16–21). He then spoke of Jesus, reminding them of his ministry and miracles among them, of how they rejected and crucified him and of how his Resurrection fulfilled a prophecy of their beloved David. He concluded his witness with a confirming and condemning testimony. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:22–36). Peter's words “pricked” their hearts, causing them to petition, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37), to which Peter readily responded, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). About “three thousand souls” that “gladly received” Peter's words and invitation were added to the church that day (Acts 2:41).

Not long after, Peter again bore witness of Christ to an astonished multitude, this time gathered at the temple on Solomon's porch. At "the hour of prayer," Peter and John had come to the Beautiful Gate of the temple, where a well-known man, "lame from his mother's womb," asked alms of them (Acts 3:1-2, 10). Peter invited the man to look on them, and as he expectantly complied, Peter, on behalf of the Savior, granted him much more than alms. "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). As the man took Peter's hand, with faith sufficient to be healed, his feet and ankles received the strength to be lifted and even leap (see Acts 3:7, 16). As he went through the temple "walking, and leaping, and praising God," an amazed crowd apparently began to follow him, wondering how the miracle was done. The exuberant man returned to Peter and John and "held" them. As the marveling crowd assembled, Peter once again raised his voice to witness of Christ. He testified to them that the lame had been healed in the name and by the power of Jesus. As on the day of Pentecost, he reminded the listeners that they had denied, rejected, and "killed the Prince of life" and testified that in fulfillment of prophecy God raised him from the dead. Peter then implored the multitude, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," and he taught them that as "children of the prophets" they had been especially privileged to have Christ first sent to them (see Acts 3:19-26). About five thousand more believers were added from the miracle performed and the witness given by Peter on that day (see Acts 4:4).

We can imagine the disappointment and dismay of "the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees" when they learned that Jesus' followers were performing miracles in his name and preaching "through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:1-2).²⁰ We suppose that they had thought that the execution of Jesus would have put an end to his work and ministry. In a desperate attempt to once again quench the fire of faith in Jesus, they arrested Peter and John that day in the temple and held them in prison overnight. The next day, as their council "examined" Peter and John, they provided the Apostles another opportunity to bear witness of Christ. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, caused them to marvel as he boldly testified that the miracle of healing for which they were arrested was done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified and whom God had raised from the dead, even the "stone" which they the "builders" had "set at nought" but which is to become "the head of the corner" and the only name whereby "we must be saved" (Acts 4:9-12). Frustrated by the undeniable and well-known evidence before them, the council could only release them, but not before threatening them, "that they speak henceforth to no man"

in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:13–18). Unfazed by the threats and fully understanding their call as Apostles and of whom they had received that call, Peter and John responded, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

This confrontation with the council of Jewish leaders who wanted Peter to cease witnessing of Christ was not Peter’s last. His next arrest was again precipitated by performing miracles of healing. As believers in Christ were daily added to the church, they brought their sick to Peter to be healed, hoping that at least the shadow of Peter might touch them as he passed by, and “they were healed every one” (Acts 5:14–16).²¹ Filled with indignation at Peter’s refusal to yield to their threats, the council rose up and put Peter with other Apostles in the common prison, but during the night the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and commanded them to “go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20).

When the council gathered the next morning to once again examine Peter, they must have been surprised to learn that not only had the Apostles escaped through a locked and guarded door, but also that they were at that very moment teaching in the temple (see Acts 5:21–25). They immediately dispatched the captain and officers to once again arrest the Apostles and bring them before the council, which they did “without violence” for fear of causing an uprising (Acts 5:26–27). The council sternly reminded the Apostles that they had been commanded to not teach in the name of Christ and accused the Apostles of “filling Jerusalem” with doctrine that was intended to bring Christ’s blood upon the council. Peter and the other Apostles once again retorted, “We ought to obey God rather than men,” and further testified that Jesus, whom they had indeed slain, had been resurrected and exalted to be a “Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:29–32). The angry and guilt-ridden council at that moment determined to slay them all, and would have, had not the wise Pharisee Gamaliel reasoned with them that if the Apostles’ work was not of God, it would die away of its own accord, but if it was of God, the council was in danger of engaging in a surely futile fight with God (see Acts 5:33–39). Somewhat softened, or perhaps frightened, by Gamaliel’s reasoning, the council chose rather to beat the Apostles, commanded them again to not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go (see Acts 5:40). Peter and the other Apostles “departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41–42).

As the book of Acts turns its agenda to chronicling Paul's ministry, we read less and less of Peter. We know that he was arrested yet again when Herod "stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church" (Acts 12:1-3). To prevent Peter's escape, Herod assigned four squads of soldiers to guard him in prison, yet one night, while sleeping chained between two soldiers, the angel of the Lord again delivered him from prison (see Acts 12:1-19).²² We read that Peter subsequently made his home in Caesarea for a time (see Acts 12:19). The last mention of Peter in the book of Acts finds him at the council in Jerusalem in which the church's expectations for Gentile converts were discussed. At that council, ever true to his mission, Peter witnessed to all that Gentile and Jew alike would be saved "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:6-11).

While New Testament historical narrative grows relatively silent about Peter after Acts 15,²³ we are fortunate to have two epistles from the Apostle.²⁴ Peter's witness of Christ permeates those epistles. In the letters Peter teaches us that we can become elect through the blood of Christ and have "a lively hope" by his Resurrection (1 Peter 1:2-3). He reminds us that Christ's sufferings and glory fulfilled prophecy and that the trial of our own faith will be rewarded with praise, honor, glory, and grace at the "appearing" and "revelation" of Christ (1 Peter 1:7, 10-11, 13). He testifies that our "spiritual sacrifices" are made acceptable to God by Christ and that Christ suffered for our sins "that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 2:5, 3:18). He speaks of Christ's ministry to the "spirits in prison" that they too might be justly judged (1 Peter 3:19, 4:6; see also D&C 138:18-21, 30). He exhorts us to endure suffering in the flesh "with the same mind" with which Christ suffered and encourages us to rejoice should we "be reproached for the name of Christ" (1 Peter 4:1, 13-14). He prays that we might receive grace and peace through knowledge of Christ and teaches that acquiring Christlike virtues helps us obtain that knowledge as well as "an entrance" into his kingdom (see 2 Peter 1:2, 4-11). He warns that if we return to the pollutions of the world after having once escaped through Christ, then our "latter end" will be "worse . . . than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20). He reflects on his personal witness of Christ's sufferings and expresses his hope to be "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1). Towards the end he resolutely acknowledges that he too must "shortly . . . put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me" (2 Peter 1:14).

In making this solemn observation, perhaps Peter was reflecting on the words Jesus spoke to him so many years earlier on the shores of Galilee. There, after commanding Peter to feed his sheep, the Savior gave him a glimpse of the future, declaring, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither

thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not” (John 21:18). John saw martyrdom for Peter in these words of Christ, explaining, “This spake [Jesus], signifying by what death [Peter] should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto [Peter], Follow me” (John 21:19).²⁵ Surely in his old age as he contemplated death, Peter could find peace and joy in knowing that he had indeed followed Christ in life and was ready to follow him in death.

Conclusion

We wish more of Peter’s activities and writings were preserved in the New Testament.²⁶ What has been preserved is a treasure and endears us to this faithful fisherman. The record, small as it is, shows us how Peter was carefully and personally prepared by Christ to be a special witness of him. As we read the account, we can discover our faith and understanding of Christ growing along with Peter’s. That growth can give us hope and perspective in our personal journeys to faith. As we watch what Christ expected of Peter become clear to him and then see the courage and dedication with which he labored to fulfill his commission from the Savior, we are led to ponder “What does Christ expect of me?” and “Am I doing enough?” As we study Peter’s witness of Christ, we find ourselves anxious to echo his words “We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69).

Notes

1. While the witness, experiences, and teachings of the Apostle Paul are more thoroughly chronicled in the New Testament than those of Peter, Paul was not one of the original Twelve and not mentioned in the four Gospels.

2. Francis Brown, “יְהוָה,” “הוֹנֵה,” *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (LaFayette, IN: Christian Copyrights, 1983), 401–2.

3. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Holy Ghost is a personage and did not “confine itself to [the] form of a dove” at the baptism of Jesus. “President Joseph Smith’s Journal,” *Journal*, 4 vols., December 1842–June 1844, 161. <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843?locale=eng&cp=161> (accessed March 4, 2014). Thus Latter-day Saints typically understand the sign of the dove to be a witness of the Holy Ghost’s presence rather than the actual embodiment of the Holy Ghost on that occasion.

4. The other disciple is only mentioned in John’s account and is not named. Because John is reluctant to refer to himself by name throughout his Gospel, many speculate that he was the other disciple. See John 18:15.

5. While the Gospel accounts describe Peter, James, and John more as simple observers at the Transfiguration, Latter-day Saints understand that these three Apostles were likewise transfigured and there received special priesthood authority. Joseph Smith taught, “the Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the Keys to Peter, James and John on the mount when they were transfigured before him.” Joseph Smith, History, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], 546. <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?p=546> (accessed February 26, 2014). Joseph Fielding Smith suggested that these three Apostles received their temple endowments and other keys associated with those ordinances on the mount at the same time. Bruce R. McConkie, comp., *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 2:165.

6. Christ’s instruction to Peter that he should forgive seven times seventy (see Matthew 18:22) is not meant to mean 490 times. Since God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, the number seven came to mean completeness or wholeness in Hebrew culture. Thus if one does something seven times, he does it completely or entirely (e.g., Joshua 6:16; Leviticus 14:7; Daniel 4:16). Accordingly, in instructing Peter to forgive seven times seventy, Christ is telling the Apostle to forgive completely and entirely. The parable of the unmerciful servant that follows appears to be given to further teach that we are forgiven as we forgive (see Matthew 18:23–35).

7. In the parable of the laborers who were hired throughout the day, Peter would have certainly identified himself with those who had labored all day long but ended up unhappy because they felt shortchanged in some way. The message would have been clear to Peter—be thankful for the privilege of working and let the Master be concerned about the reward.

8. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 12:38–57, makes this point more clearly than the KJV.

9. For an interesting discussion on this event, see Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 1:412.

10. Of Peter and the frequent reproofs he received from Christ, President Spencer W. Kimball observed, “He reproofed Peter at times because he loved him, and Peter, being a great man, was able to grow from this reproof. There is a wonderful verse in the book of Proverbs all of us need to remember: ‘The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.’ (Prov. 15:31–32.) It is a wise leader or a wise follower who can cope with the ‘reproof of life.’ Peter could do this because he knew that Jesus loved him, and thus Jesus was able to groom Peter for a very high place or responsibility in the kingdom.” “Jesus: The Perfect Leader,” *Ensign*, August 1979, 5.

11. There is some confusion among the Gospel writers about how soon the disciples understood that Christ had been resurrected. While John and Luke suggest that initially they did not know why the tomb was empty, Matthew and Mark record that the angel explained to Mary that Christ had risen from the dead and told her to report such to the disciples (see Matthew 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–8). Mark further reports that when told by Mary that Jesus had risen and had been seen by her, they did not believe her (see Mark 16:9–11).

12. Luke is the only Gospel writer to refer to this private visit to Peter. Paul seems to affirm it in his first epistle to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 15:3–8).

13. All the Gospel writers but Matthew give some version of this appearance. Luke’s is the most detailed. John records that the experience was repeated eight days later when the still unbelieving Thomas, who was absent at the first appearance, was present and made a witness as well (see John 20:24–29).

14. For more on this exchange between Christ and Peter and the principles that can be learned from it, see Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Spiritual Bonfires of Testimony,” *Ensign*, November 1992, 34–36; L. Tom Perry, “When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren,” *Ensign*, November 1974, 16–18.

15. Matthew and Mark both report that when Jesus first appeared to Mary after the Resurrection, he told her to tell the disciples that he would meet them in Galilee, perhaps to facilitate the teaching moment that occurred there (see Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:7). John indicates that Peter, James, John, Nathaniel, Thomas, and two other disciples made the journey. It is not clear if the unnamed disciples were part of the Twelve (see John 21:2).

16. Some understand the antecedent of *these* in this verse to be the other disciples dining with them, but the message is clearer if we understand *these* as a reference to the fish.

17. Some observe that by thrice allowing Peter to affirm his love for him, Christ was giving Peter a chance to amend for his thrice-made denial that desperate night of the trial. See, for example, James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1916, repr. 1982), 693; Jeffrey R. Holland, “The First Great Commandment,” *Ensign*, November 2012, 83–84. For a discussion of the denial and lessons to be learned from it, see Gordon B. Hinckley, “And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 65–67; Neal A. Maxwell, “A Brother Offended,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 37–38. Other commentators, noting the subtle differences in the Greek of the text, suggest that the three questions were each asked to teach Peter different aspects and duties of his calling. Accordingly the Savior twice asked Peter “lovest thou me” using the Greek *agapao* for love, meaning a social or moral kind of love, often thought of as godly or unconditional love and elsewhere translated as “charity” (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13:1–4; 2 Peter 1:7; Revelations 2:19). The third time Jesus asked Peter, “Lovest thou me,” he used the term *phileo* for love, meaning friendship, affection, or brotherly love. Interestingly, in answer to each of the three questions Peter affirmed his love using *phileo*. To the first affirmation of Peter’s love, Christ commanded him to “feed” from the Greek *bosko*, meaning to pasture, graze, or nourish, his “lambs,” from the Greek *arnion*, meaning a young or baby sheep. To the second affirmation of Peter’s love, Christ commanded him to “feed,” from the Greek *poimaino*, meaning to tend or shepherd, his “sheep,” from the Greek *probaton*, meaning an adult sheep. In response to Peter’s third affirmation of love for Christ, he was to *bosko* his *probaton*. Thus by asking the question three times in three ways the Savior asked the disciple if he had both charity and brotherly love for him, and in his subsequent commandments the Savior taught Peter that he was to not only nourish but also shepherd both the young and old of his flock. For Latter-day Saint commentaries of this type, see Anthon H. Lund, in Conference Report, October 1908, 119, and Robert C. Webb, “Truth Seeking: Its Symptoms and After Effects,” *Improvement Era*, September 1913, 1075–91.

18. For more discussion on this event and the principles that can be learned from it, see Robert D. Hales, “When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 80–83.

19. The Apostles appear to have been commissioned by the resurrected Christ to be witnesses to the world on two other occasions. Matthew records that on that day in Galilee when Jesus assured the eleven that all power in heaven and earth had been given him, he commanded the eleven to go and “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:16–20; see also Mark 16:15–18; Luke 24:46–47). A similar commission is recorded in Acts. After the Savior commanded the Apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they “receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon” them, then they were to “be witnesses” of Christ “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:4–11).

20. The teaching of the resurrection of the dead would have been especially distressing to the unbelieving Sadducees, for it was a point of contention between them and the Pharisees (see Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:6–8).

21. Two other specific accounts of healing by Peter are found in Acts. One is the healing in the name of Christ of Æneas, who “had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy,” and the other the raising from the dead of the beloved seamstress Dorcas (see Acts 9:43).

22. The account of the damsel Rhoda, who in her surprise and excitement to hear the escaped Peter’s voice at the door left him knocking while she awakened the household to share the good news, adds a personal and humorous touch to the account (see Acts 12:12–19).

23. There are two additional references to Peter’s activities found in Paul’s epistle to the Galatians. One speaks of Paul spending fifteen days with Peter in Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and the other describes a confrontation Paul had with Peter over the propriety of eating with Gentiles (see Galatians 1:18; 2:7–12).

24. While the authorship of the Petrine epistles is a topic of debate among biblical scholars, I accept Peter’s authorship. For a recent defense of Peter’s authorship, see Larry R. Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 107–13, 207–14.

25. Some see another prophecy of Peter’s martyrdom given at the Last Supper. That night as Jesus explained to his disciples, “Whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 13:33), “Peter inquired, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now: but thou shalt follow me afterwards” (John 13:36). For a discussion of this as a prophecy of Peter’s martyrdom, see McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:769, 863–64.

26. Some Christian writers of the second through fourth centuries AD apparently decided to satisfy our want for more writings from or about Peter by composing apocryphal works such as *The Acts of Peter*, *The Acts of Peter and Andrew*, *The Acts of Peter and the Twelve*, and *The Acts of Peter and Paul*.