

# Bible Studies about Peter

## Study 7: Peter and Christ's Resurrection

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### Background

In our previous study we looked at the account of Peter's denial of Christ. This came after Peter's experiences in the garden of Gethsemane. In this study on Peter and Christ's resurrection we learn about Peter's initial encounters with the resurrected Christ, before he ultimately received forgiveness and his great commission.

### The Message

There are four key passages from scripture that are relevant to the account of Peter and Christ's resurrection. The first two relate to Peter's visit to the empty tomb. The last two relate to the resurrected Jesus appearing to Peter. These are as follows:

*"...and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened."*<sup>1</sup>

*"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes."*<sup>2</sup>

I often wonder how Peter must have felt at this time after all his experiences, and also what direction his life would have taken. He must have been filled with such doubt, fear, and insecurity – he must have felt so utterly lost. Memories of his time with Jesus must have flooded through his mind, and perhaps there was guilt and recrimination of how he had failed, and how all his passionate statements had come to nothing. Echoes of *"God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."*

In the first passage then, we learn of the time when the women came with spices to go anoint the body of Jesus only to find that the tomb lay empty. When they returned to report their encounter, the account tells us that Peter *"went into the tomb."* He had to see for himself firsthand. I wonder if at that time he remembered Jesus saying how *"The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24:9-12

<sup>2</sup> John 20:1-10

*raised*<sup>3</sup>? I wonder too if hope welled up inside him, that perhaps Jesus really had been raised to life - which as he was later to discover was indeed the case. So from his initial position, the whole dynamic had shifted. He could not even begin to conceive what had happened. The account is paralleled by John in the second passage.

Peter must have gone through an intense period of grief, which for many occurs through five stages:

- **Denial**

Had Peter truly come to terms with the loss of Jesus? Could he reconcile the loss of Christ, the Son of God, even though Jesus has told him what had to happen? But in grief we rarely think rationally, and this in itself is at the heart of denial, particularly when we are in the grip of such intense emotions.

- **Anger**

Peter may have wondered what was the point of it all? Having given up 3 years of his life, he may have wondered why? He may even have been angry that his expectation of how things might unfold was not realised...it was truly a bitter lesson he had to learn.

- **Bargaining**

One aspect of this for Peter may have been blaming himself...if only he had stayed awake in the garden, if only he had not denied knowing Jesus. Sometimes our lives are filled with regrets...the 'if only's'.

- **Depression**

We don't know if Peter even had chance to enter into this developing stage of grief. We do know depression is debilitating, and certainly Peter must have been in shock. He also showed intense sadness when he wept so bitterly after denying Jesus.

- **Acceptance**

Even after Jesus had been resurrected, the way in which events unfolded must have come as quite a shock to the disciples. What expectations did they have when they were with Jesus before He was crucified? How had those expectations changed with Jesus' resurrection? Perhaps they truly understood for perhaps the first time, and began to accept.

As we shall see, Peter subsequently encountered the risen Jesus. In fact Jesus appeared to Peter before any of the other apostles after the resurrection – knowing the intense remorse Peter must have felt. And the context of these later passages would seem to suggest that Peter had told the other disciples of his encounter. Perhaps they had not believed him. Certainly Scripture gives us no insight into what happened in the first of these encounters that Peter had with Jesus:

*“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That*

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 9:22

same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!”<sup>4</sup>

“Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”<sup>5</sup>

The first of these passages tell us of the remarkable encounter that two of the disciples has with the risen Jesus on the Emmaus road. One of the two disciples was Cleopas (Luke 24:18), and whilst many commentaries would suggest that the second disciple was Peter, this seems unlikely since later in the passage we read how the two “found the eleven”<sup>6</sup> Of course, Peter was one of the Eleven apostles. The two disciples, however, affirm the encounter that Peter had with Jesus earlier that day. This is immediately followed Jesus himself appearing before all of the disciples.

The second passage again confirms Peter’s two encounters.

## Questions

1. Have you ever been in a truly hopeless situation, a situation when all worldly things have failed? Can you remember how you felt at the time, and what your thoughts were? Spend a few moments writing your account down.
2. Meditate on Peter’s experiences, and how he too was in a hopeless situation. Now Peter “ran to the tomb”<sup>7</sup> - he must have had some sense of hope, a hope that when all worldly things have failed can only be restored in Jesus alone. Is the hope that we have in Jesus Christ alone? Consider those things in our life that we place our hope in, and come before the Lord in prayer and ask Him to restore your hope in Jesus.
3. To experience a deep sense of loss, and go through a grieving process is a tough ordeal - and a uniquely personal experience. No person can truly understand how you feel, but we have comfort in knowing that the Lord truly knows us. Psalm 139:13-16 tell us “*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.*”<sup>8</sup> He wants to comfort us, and He wants us to be real. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 which tells us of the “*Father of mercies and the God of all consolation.*”<sup>9</sup> Remember also how 2 Corinthians tells us that “*we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and*

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 24:30-34

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

<sup>6</sup> Luke 24:33

<sup>7</sup> Luke 24:12

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 139:13-16

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:3

*does not come from us.*"<sup>10</sup> These are great passages from scripture that challenge us to be real people in an environment where we should have freedom and space to be at our most real – in Church.

4. When we have an encounter with the risen Christ, do we leave the experience wondering to ourselves what had happened? How can we be sensitive to these encounters, and know that they are with Christ? What would an appropriate response be to such an encounter?

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<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:7