

Contrast John and Peter

John 20:1-9 The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. 2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. 3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. 4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 5 And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. 6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, 7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. 8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

Introduction:

The story of John outrunning Peter to the Tomb of Jesus is a great reflection of more than their athletic ability. John was an old man when this was written. This story paints a beautiful picture of who these two men were and what their relationship had been like. John arrived first at the tomb, but he did not go in and he made a point of telling us that. Peter fell behind, but when he arrived he went straight in, John makes a point of telling us this too. It was not until after Peter went in that John did, and when he did he saw and believed. Peter was their leader and this was their pattern. Peter acted and John observed. After all, Peter had been the one to step out of the boat and test the waters, literally, not John or any of the other Apostles.

In a classroom setting, we might say John would be the one who knows the right answer but declines to raise his hand and Peter is the one who blurts out an answer forgetting to raise his hand.

A Word of Caution:

When undertaking a character study of this nature, it is important to keep the objective centered in your mind. Christ is the objective; to exalt Him, to learn all that we can about Him, to marvel at His handiwork. There is a danger in studying the lives of men that can arise if we make them more than they were, just a couple of ordinary fishermen. We should not exalt, even these Apostles, above that which is fitting. However, they were chosen by Christ and then rigorously transformed by him. The work which He did in them is to be exalted and admired. It is the handiwork of Christ, and it is truly marvelous. You can gain an appreciation for an artist by observing their work.

I. Identity and Background (Before Christ)

A. Simon Peter

1. **Family:** The man that we know as Peter was born, Simon. Little is known about Peter's parents except that his father's name was Jonah. His brother was Andrew, tradition regards Andrew as the older brother yet in my observation he reminds me more of a younger brother, often tagging along with the older. Andrew is responsible for introducing Peter to Christ. (**John 1:41**)

Peter was married as seen by the fact that Jesus healed his mother-in-law (**Mark 1:30-31**). His wife is not named and it is unclear if they had children. In a somewhat obscure passage (**1 Cor. 9:5**) Paul tells us that Peter would take his wife with him on his missionary journeys. This may indicate that they either did not have children or that their children were grown by this point. The fact that Peter had a wife at the time of Jesus' calling, may also indicate that Peter was among the older of the Apostles.

2. **Location-** John tells us that Peter was from Bethsaida (**John 1:44**) and Mark tells us that Peter and Andrew shared a home in Capernaum (**Mark 1:29**). At first glance this seems to be a contradiction. However, both were fishing towns and were only separated by 5 miles. The most probable explanation is that they relocated from Bethsaida to Capernaum for reasons related to their occupation (i.e., better access to fishing territory, avoiding a processing tax, or partnering with the sons of Zebedee)

3. **Occupation:** Peter's occupation was as a fisherman along with his brother, Andrew. This was a common profession in the area, The Sea of Galilee was known for its fishing industry. They were partners with James and John. (**Luke 5:7-10**)



B. John

1. **Family:** John's Father is Zebedee. It seems likely that Zebedee owned a fishing business. The fact that he had hired servants and was in partnership with Andrew and Peter indicates this. This was in Capernaum. John's mother was most likely

Salome. (**Matthew 27:55-56 & Mark 15:40**) John's brother was James the Apostle, sometimes referred to as James the Great. John was probably the younger brother as his name is typically mentioned last as "the brother of James". Though we are not given his age in the scriptures, it is often believed that John was the youngest among them, being anywhere from 15-18 years old when he began to follow Jesus.

2. **Location:** While we are not told specifically in the bible what John's birthplace was, it seems likely that like Peter and Andrew, he was from Bethsaida and later relocated to Capernaum. It is here we see him as an adult and disciple of Christ. It seems probable that there was a connection between these two families, most likely this connection centered around their shared occupation in the fishing industry and the cooperative business plans that resulted in their partnership. Like Peter, and most of the Apostles, his missionary journeys later in life would take him far away from this "city of comfort" (Capernaum) that he knew so well.
3. **Occupation:** While John and his brother James were also fishermen, they may have been a little better off than the average worker in this industry. This is seen by the fact that Zebedee owned multiple boats, had hired workers, and was in a business partnership with Andrew and Peter. This likely gave John and his family a leg up and access to certain people and places that the other apostles may have not had, we will see possible evidence of this later at the time of Jesus' arrest.

II. Ministry with Christ

A. The Three Callings

1. Salvation - (**John 1:35-51**)
2. Ministry - (**Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, Luke 5:4-11**)
3. Apostleship - (**Luke 6:12-13**)

B. The Inner Circle

1. Peter, James, and John comprised a special group even within the twelve. These three were eyewitnesses to some very notable occurrences.
 - a. The Transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:28-36**)
 - b. The Garden of Gethsemane (**Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46**)
 - c. The Healing of Jairus' Daughter (**Mark 5:37-43, Luke 8:51-56**)
 - d. When the Apostle Paul is converted, he refers to "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars" (**Galatians 2:9**)

C. Character and Temperament:

1. PETER: From Simon to Peter (John 1:42, Mark 3:16)

- a. Peter's birth name was Simon
- b. Jesus gave him the name Peter, meaning rock or stone
- c. Paul used the Aramaic version of Peter, Cephas, in some of his writings
- d. John also uses Cephas when introducing Peter in his gospel, Aramaic was the common language of the day
- e. He is the son of Jona, thus we get Simon Barjona (son of Jona)
- f. It seems that some of the New Testament writers were not exactly sure what they should call him, thus we often see him referred to as Simon, Peter, or Simon Peter as John most often did.
- g. Sometimes Christ refers to him as Simon when he reacts in a way that reflects his old nature (Mark 14:37) and as Peter when his actions reflect his regenerated nature (Matthew 16:18). Although this pattern is not consistent enough to state it as a rule.

When Christ changed Simon's name to Peter, meaning a rock or stone, he was not declaring what Peter was at that moment but rather what His intentions were for Peter. During their time together Christ was shaping him to be a man who would be a dependable leader others could look to as well as an example of a leader whose boldness and steadfast nature would be a foundational example for future generations. The tools employed in the shaping of stone are a hammer and chisel, used with blunt force.

2. Peter's Character

Of the original twelve apostles, we know more about Peter's character than any other. He was bold, outspoken, and a natural-born leader. He is often seen as impulsive, acting first and thinking later. At times, this leads to great mistakes, on other occasions, it leads to great displays of faith. He was deeply passionate and protective of those he loved, as we would expect a good leader to be.

a. Impulsive and Zealous

1. Suggestion at the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:33)
2. Stepping out of the Boat (Matthew 14:28)

b. Boldness

1. Sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:14)
2. Before the Sanhedrin Council (Acts 4:19)

c. Courageous and Loyal

1. I will never deny you (**Matthew 26:35**)
2. Peter's Confession "Thou art the Christ" (**Matthew 16:16**)

d. Protective Leader

1. Drawing his sword against Malchus (**John 18:10**)
2. Rebuking Christ (**Matthew 16:22**)

e. Fearful yet Penitent

1. Denial of Jesus (**Matthew 26:70,72,74**)
2. Wept Bitterly (**Luke 22:62**)

In time, Peter would learn to balance his strengths with humility and gentleness and would then go on to teach others to do the same (**1 Peter 5:5-6**). Peter is a fan favorite among students of the bible, his words and actions were raw and genuine, qualities so many of us can relate to. His spiritual growth throughout the biblical account is inspiring.

1. JOHN: Son of Thunder (**Mark 3:17**)

- a. Most often he is referred to simply as John, the brother of James
- b. He is referred to as one of the Sons of Zebedee
- c. In his own gospel, he never refers to himself directly, choosing instead to call himself "the other disciple" or "another disciple" (**John 18:16**) He also refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" thus giving him the name of John, the beloved. (**John 21:20**) This indicates that John shared a special closeness and affection with Christ as compared with the others. I would say John stayed as close to him for as long as he possibly could.
- d. In his second and third epistle, John refers to himself as "the Elder" (**2 John 1:1, 3 John 1:1**). This could be a reference to his position, however, I think it more likely indicated his age at the time of writing.
- e. Along with his brother James, he is given the name of Boanerges, meaning "Sons of Thunder" The name is only found once in Mark's gospel and denotes a fiery and destructive zeal, like that of a thunderstorm.

2. John's Character

Unlike Peter, John's personality was not actively on display. He was more patient and reserved. Yet, there are some scriptures that give us insight into John's character.

a. Bold and Zealous

1. As mentioned above, John was given the name "Son of Thunder" (**Mark 3:17**) by Christ, indicating a fiery zeal for righteousness. However, this zeal needed to be guided by compassion, an element that was missing on one occasion when the brothers asked Christ if they should call down fire from Heaven (like Elijah) to consume a Samaritan village that would not receive Christ
2. We should not mistake quietness for weakness, John was as fierce of a defender of truth as Peter, this is evident by their testimony before the Sanhedrin council. (**Acts 4:19-20**)

b. Elitist and Absolute

1. On one occasion John rebukes a man who was casting out demons in Jesus' name because the man was not a part of their company. (**Mark 9:38**) This was not an uncommon mentality among the Jews at this time.
2. On another occasion, James and John seem to have put their mother up to asking Jesus for a preferred position in His kingdom. (**Matthew 20:20-22**)
3. They would have also been involved in the debate among the disciples about who should be greatest in the kingdom (**Matt 18:1-4**) It seems not unlikely that they may have been the instigators in this argument.
4. John tended to frame spiritual matters in absolute terms (**1 John 3:8, 15**)

c. Humble and Contemplative

1. John does not refer to himself by name in his gospel. This seems to have been done to take the focus off himself and place it on Christ, showing his humility.
2. In the same way that Mary is said to have "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" I see John doing this as well though it is not expressly stated.
3. John's later writings are filled with abstract themes upon which he had contemplated for many years such as the opening of his gospel (**John 1:1-3**)

d. Loving and Compassionate

1. John uses the word love over 50 times in his gospel and at least 30 times in 1 John, no other writer emphasized love as often or deeply as the Apostle John
2. Particularly in his three epistles, the love he has for his disciples is evident, calling them, my dear children (**1 John 2:1, 3 John 1:4**)
3. This is a result of having been so close to the one he would later describe as the embodiment of love itself (**1 John 4:16**)

2. Jesus' Arrest and Peter's Denial (John 18:1-12, 25-27)

- A. This was Peter's great trial of faith. He was impulsive, loyal, and protective of Christ and he proved it by drawing his sword. Everything within him wanted to defend Christ, yet this was in contradiction to Jesus's very purpose for coming.
- B. As far as we can tell, John acted like we would have expected. He was quiet and observant.
- C. Both Peter and John followed Christ as he was led away to the palace of the High Priest.
- D. The rest of the Apostles forsook him and fled.
- E. John was known by the High Priest, and this afforded him entrance into the palace. He spoke to the doorkeeper and got Peter into the courtyard as well.
- F. It was here that the emotional turmoil and confusion of Christ's arrest would give way to fear for Peter.
- G. Three times he would be asked if he knew Christ and would deny him each time, then he heard the cock crow and his heart sank remembering the words of the Master, he went out and wept bitterly. (**John 13:36-38**)
- H. So far as we can tell, John simply observed all that happened.

3. At the Cross (John 19:16-30)

- A. John is the only Apostle who was present at the crucifixion of Christ. (**John 19:25-27**)
- B. It was here that Jesus committed the care of his mother, Mary, to the Apostle John.
- C. This brings us up to the passage that we began with. Peter was back and he was with John when Mary Magdalene came running up and told them that Jesus was not in the sepulcher!

- D. John is the only gospel writer to record the restoration of Peter (**John 21:15-25**)
- E. It is on this occasion that Christ foretells Peter's death (**John 21:18-19**)

III. Ministry after Christ

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we learn from studying the lives of these two Apostles is seen after Christ had ascended. They had been with Jesus, and it had changed them. Peter's denial of Christ seemed to be the final strike of the chisel that shaped him into the Rock that Christ had been shaping him to be. John was no longer simply a witness to the Love of Christ but an embodiment of it and would go on to earn the title of the "Apostle of Love"

A. Writings

1. Epistles of Peter

- a. Filled with practical advice born out of his personal experiences.
- b. They demonstrate the lessons he learned in humility, restraint, and dedication.
- c. They show a man who was changed by the painful lessons and experiences that he went through both in walking with Christ and ultimately in bidding him farewell in this life. Yet, a man who had learned humility and was not so proud that he would not share these hard lessons with his hearers.
- d. The gospel of Mark is commonly believed to have been written based on Peter's observations shared with Mark

2. John's Writings

- a. John was one of the major contributors of the New Testament, writing the second most books (second to Paul) and having the fourth highest word count (Luke leading)
- b. John wrote a gospel, which was the most theological of all the gospels and the greatest defense of Christ's divinity
- c. He wrote three letters with the affection of a loving Pastor addressed to his "little children"
- d. Perhaps the most amazing thing about John's writing is his age at the time they were written. Based on the historical

- context of what he wrote, it is estimated that he wrote his gospel and his epistles at the age of 80–90 years old
- e. Around 95 A.D. John was exiled to Patmos. He would have been around 90 years old. Tradition holds that he lived in a small cave while exiled there. His friends had all been martyred. It was here where one Lord's Day he was in the Spirit and heard a great voice, like a trumpet, and turning to see it, he beheld Christ arrayed in all his glory. He was never really alone, even now.
 - f. So when you read John, remember you are reading the writings of an old man, full of memory and life experience, knowing his time was short and longing to impart what wisdom he had acquired to his "little children"
 - g. Age did not change everything about these men, John continued to be an abstract thinker, writing about themes such as love, truth, light vs darkness, and eternal life.

B. Missionary Work

1. Peter

- a. Starting in Jerusalem, Peter would travel to Judea, Samaria, and Antioch as recorded in Scripture.
- b. His letters were addressed to those in several provinces of Asia Minor, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.
- c. Early church traditions, such as that of Eusebius and Clement record that he would travel extensively. Perhaps making it to the Middle East, Egypt, and ultimately Rome, where he would finish his course.
- d. Remember, that Paul stated (1 Corinthians 9:5) that it was his practice to bring his wife with him
- e. While we often focus on the missionary travels of the Apostle Paul, Peter too was busy spreading the gospel everywhere he could. No doubt proclaiming boldly that Jesus was the Christ.

2. John

- a. Like the other Apostles, John would start in Jerusalem and along with Peter would travel to Samaria where he would assist in the ministry of Philip (the deacon evangelist not the Apostle)
- b. John may have also traveled to various regions in Asia Minor, however, his greatest missionary efforts would take place in Ephesus where he would nurture the young churches there. He was especially used in defending the doctrines of Christ

against false teachings that would arise, such as Gnosticism (though it was not likely called this in the first century)

- c. Tradition holds that John would leave Ephesus being exiled to Patmos but would return to Ephesus following his exile. Most of John's writings were likely written in Ephesus toward the end of his life.

C. Finishing their course

1. Peter

- a. Peter's death was foretold by Christ as is recorded in John's gospel. (John 21:18-19)
- b. Tradition holds that this foretelling was fulfilled at the hands of the Romans under the evil reign of Emperor Nero.
- c. Eusebius, citing Clement, tells us that Peter's wife was led away before him to her death. It is said that Peter called out to her "Remember the Lord"
- d. A short time later, Peter was also led to his death. Remembering the Lord and considering himself unworthy even to die as his Master did, tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down at his own request.
- e. This is said to have occurred between 64-68 A.D.

2. John

- a. Though we have no way of knowing, we can imagine the simultaneous sorrow and joy that John would have felt at hearing this news. Sorrow, at the loss of one who had been a fishing partner, a lifelong friend, a Christian brother, and a fellow Apostle. Yet joy, in knowing that Peter was now reunited with the Master.
- b. Early church history tells us that John was the only Apostle not to suffer a Martyr's death. It is believed that he died of natural causes around 100 A.D. being nearly 100 years old, having lived one of the most rewarding lives a man could hope for.

While Peter was the early leader among the Apostles and used to lay the foundation for the Church, John's great contribution was in seeing to the continuation of his ministry and passing the torch to future generations of the church. Many of the earliest church leaders have something to say of John from firsthand experience. Polycarp is said to have been converted under John's ministry. He would be known among them as the "Aged Apostle".