

## The Call of the First Disciples: Simon-Peter meets Jesus (for the first time)

### JCV Integrated Text: **John 1:40-42**

Andrew the brother of Simon-Peter was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is, when translated, “Christ”).

He brought him to Jesus. And seeing him, Jesus said “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which translated is “Peter”).

### Introduction

Before looking at the text it is worth reminding ourselves that Simon-Peter frames each of the Gospels as part of the “eyewitness inclusios”.

In the Synoptic Gospels Simon-Peter is the first and the last disciple mentioned:

- [Matthew 4:18 & 26:75](#)
- [Mark 1:16 & 16:7](#)
- [Luke 4:38 & 24:34](#)

This is consistent with the early view of when the Gospels were written (see [LTL2: When did the Gospels get written](#)). Peter has become the ‘chair’ of the discipleship committee who capture the authorised version of the story of Jesus before they go off on their mission trips.

Simon Peter is a secondary eyewitness in John’s Gospel, written in the late AD60s. Here Andrew, John & Peter form the key “eyewitness inclusio”):

- [John 1:37-40 \(Andrew & Another\)](#)
  - [John 1:40-44 \(Peter\)](#)
  - [John 21:15-21\(Peter\)](#)
- [John 21:24 \(John & Another\)](#)

We have already seen in [LMY 1.06 The First Disciples – Andrew and John](#)) that it was revealed to Andrew that John should record a Gospel:

‘The fourth of the Gospels is that **of John**, [one] of the disciples. To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], he said, ‘Fast with me from today to three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us tell it to one another.’ In the same night it was revealed to **Andrew**, [one] of the apostles, that **John** should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it...’

### The Muratorian Canon

So Peter is secondary to John and Andrew but is still viewed as someone with authority in the Gospel.

### The Text – John 1:40-42

We will see that John wants to present Peter in a way which demonstrates Jesus' prophetic insight about him. By the time the Gospel is written Peter has:-

- Emerged as a leader
- Chaired the group appointing a replacement for Judas
- Preached the first evangelistic sermon
- Presided over the Jerusalem church
- Planted a church in Rome

He has become a 'rock'.

So when John introduces Peter in (John 1:42) he is careful to note that while Jesus identifies who Simon is ('the son of John') He also says something prophetic about what He sees in Peter for the future - '**shall be called** Cephas (which translated is "Peter")'. **Note:** (Peter means rock in Greek and Cephas means rock in Aramaic).

We may easily miss this prophetic statement about Peter in John 1:42 as our minds tend to focus on the more often quoted statement of Jesus

"I also tell you now because you **are** Peter, that on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

**Matthew 16:18**

So John is careful to highlight when Jesus first meets Simon that He sees something which is not yet present in Peter but will emerge in the future.

Until the event where Jesus describes Peter as being a rock he is mainly referred to in the synoptics as Simon, then Simon-Peter and later as Peter. In Acts and the Letters he is exclusively Peter.

### A Puzzle

Translations of the initial description of Peter in John 1:42 vary between versions of the English Bible.

Son of John	Son of Jonah
NASB	KJV
NIV	CEV
ESV	WEB
Berean Literal	Young's Literal

All the synoptic Gospels say 'Simon, son of Jonah' (eg. In Matthew 16:17, Βαριωνᾶ - Barjona) but in John 1:42 it says 'Simon, son of John' (υἱὸς Ἰωάννου - son of John). Some translations

change it here to Jonah thinking it must have been a mistake but they are clearly different names – too different for confusion.

Simon Peter's business in Capernaum (Καφαρναούμ / Caper – naum meaning 'in the village of Nahum'. The only other prophet from Galilee is Jonah. Jesus uses John here acknowledging his human family but prophetically sees something in Peter which he wants to call out – he will become a rock.

The transformation of Peter is enormous. We see a lot of the fruit in the New Testament letters where Peter has both grown into what was prophesied over him and is teaching it on to others – eg. 'In 1 Peter 2:5 'You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood'.

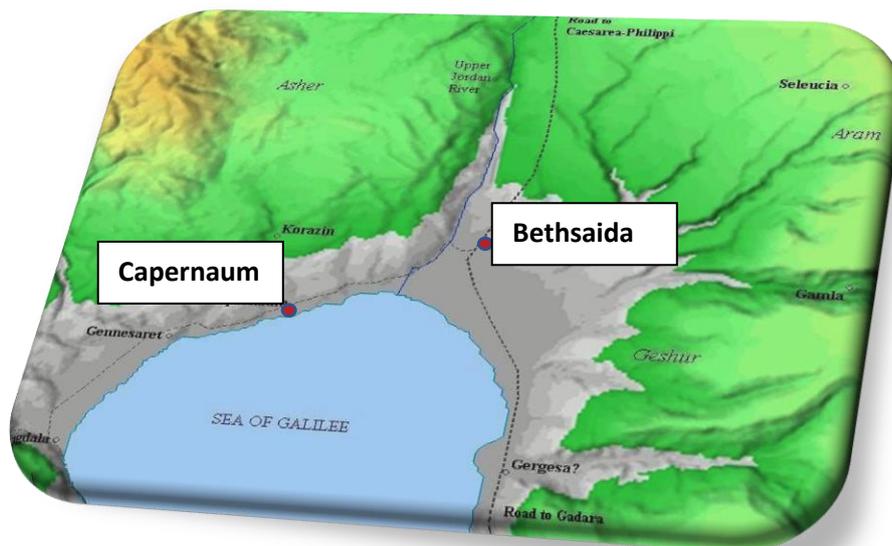
Also remember Jesus in a τέκτων / 'Tekton' (Mark 6:3) which, although is often translated as 'carpenter', the Greek word means a craftsman or someone who models or builds something out of stone. So Peter will be modelling something of Jesus – the stone the builders rejected. (1 Peter 2:4). The one whom no-one else saw but Jesus saw the quality and potential within.

So lets take a brief overview of the life of Peter

## Timeline of Peter

### ~1 AD - Approximate time of the birth of Simon, son of John

Peter was born in the Galilean town of Bethsaida. His brother, Andrew, and Philip were also from the same town which was which was predominantly Greek. It is just outside Bethsaida where Jesus feeds the five thousand. The name means 'house of fishermen'.



Map from bibleatlas.org with added labels

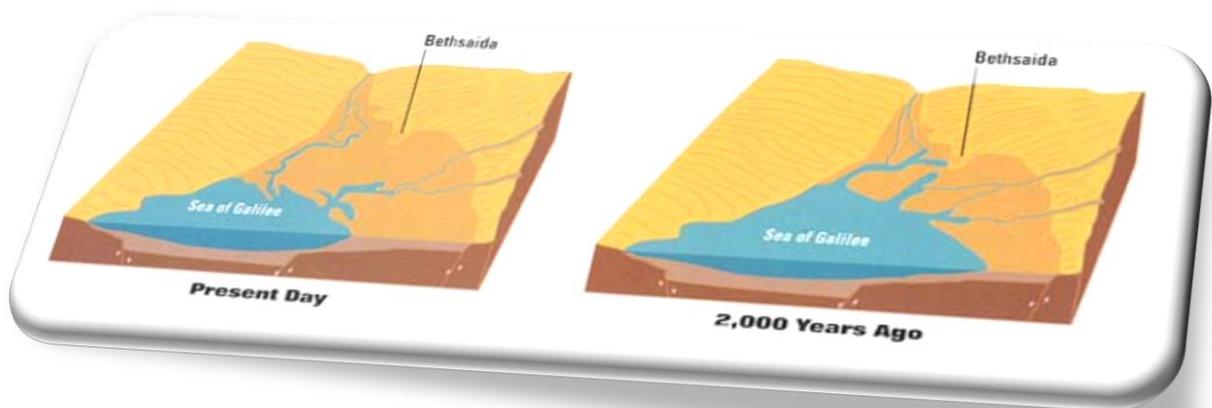
There are 3 candidates for the site of Bethsaida which are all within 1.5 miles of each other.

**(i) Et-Tell**



Photo by Zachary Wong

This is the traditionally preferred site is about 1.5 miles from the sea and there is archeological evidence of fishermen living there. It is also thought that 2000 years ago the water level of the Sea of Galilee was higher so that Et-Tell was only 1 mile away from the sea.



However Josephus tells us that about 30AD Philip the Tetrarch builds up Bethsaida and it becomes a major Roman dwelling place and there is no evidence of this at Et-Tell. So it seems there is a missing layer in the archeology around the time of Jesus throwing some doubt on this as the site of Bethsaida.

## (ii) Al-Araj



Photo by Zachary Wong

This is a smaller site where the Jordan joins the Sea of Galilee.

In 2017 a church from the Byzantine period was uncovered which fits an ancient record of a church being built in the place where Peter grew up. When the archaeologists excavated beneath this they found dwellings from the Roman period (fitting Josephus) and beneath that a Jewish house showing signs of 1<sup>st</sup> century activity. This seems to be the primary candidate for the site of Bethsaida now.

## (iii) El-Mesydiah

This is just outside Al Araj but much smaller. It is also in roughly the right location but very little evidence to make a case for it over Al-Araj.

## ~20-26 AD - Simon marries and settles in Capernaum

Simon's wife is not mentioned in the Gospels but she is implied by his Mother-in-law featuring early in Gospels (Matthew 8:14-18; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41). His wife is referred to directly elsewhere (eg. 1 Cor 9:5).

Capernaum is perhaps Simon's wife's home-town. He starts a fishing business there, and lives with at least his brother and Mother-in-law. Later in Matthew 17:24-27 when returning through Capernaum Simon is challenged about whether Jesus had paid the Temple tax. As a result Jesus pays for himself and Simon. He doesn't pay for Andrew which implies that Andrew is less than 20 years old. So Simon-Peter is probably around 25 years old and newly married at this point. This may also explain why he moved to Capernaum – left his parents in Bethsaida and cleft to his wife in Capernaum.

### **29 AD Simon is introduced to Jesus**

Simon is introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew who was a follower of John the Baptist making a bold statement

‘Come and see the one who is the Christ’

John 1:40-41

We assume that Simon then goes back with Jesus to Cana. And that he got to know Jesus better during His stay with His mother in Capernaum (referred to but undocumented in John 2:12,13).

Simon Peter is not specifically referenced until Jesus moves to Capernaum permanently and calls the fisherman to travel with Him

### **30 AD The call to follow Jesus**

While Simon and Andrew are fishing at the Sea of Galilee, Jesus sees them and asks them to follow Him. (Matthew 4:18, Mark 1:16-18)

### **32 AD Simon Peter confesses Jesus as Christ**

He is commissioned as the start of Jesus’ church (Matthew 16:16-18) and prophetically becomes Peter.

### **33 AD The risen Jesus appears to Peter**

Jesus appears to Peter before appearing to the other apostles. (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5). Peter becomes the leader of the remaining disciples.

Peter preaches the first evangelistic message at Pentecost in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:14-36) and is leading the new Jerusalem church.

### **34+ AD The Church is growing and Peter oversees the ‘apostles’ teaching’ about Jesus**

Peter is presiding over the twelve who are organising the events and teachings of Jesus to instruct the new believers. The ‘apostles teaching’ is the beginning of what becomes Matthew’s Gospel. Extra leaders are required to allow this important work to continue, Acts 6:1.

### **37-39 AD Stephen is martyred and the church spreads**

After Stephen is martyred Peter and John follow Philip to wider Judea & Samaria to establish local churches (Acts 8:14-25, 9:32-35), leading to the first gentile house-church (Acts 10:1-48).

Under Peter's leadership, Barnabas is sent to Antioch to consolidate a church there.

### **40-41 AD Things in Jerusalem get difficult**

Caligula fulfils the "Abomination of Desolation" prophecy.

### **42 AD Peter is arrested and supernaturally escapes**

Herod Agrippa puts Peter in prison but an angel of the Lord God allows Peter to escape supernaturally "to another place" (Acts 12:1-18).

This leads Peter to Rome, probably via Antioch (he is their apostle) and possibly via Corinth.

'You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time'.

**Dionysius, Fragments from a Letter to the Roman Church Chapter III**

### **44 AD Peter leaves Rome**

This triggers Mark to write his Gospel, (Matthew's Gospel already exists).

### **45-58 AD Peter is moving between, Jerusalem, Antioch, Bythinia and Rome**

According to references in early church writings, Peter seems to be moving between, Jerusalem, Antioch, Bythinia and Rome during this period. He may well cross paths with Andrew's missionary work.

### **~59-64 AD Peter seems to be in Rome at the same time as Paul**

### **64-67 AD Peter is martyred**

He is crucified up-side-down Rome for his belief in the resurrection because he felt unworthy to die the same way as Jesus (this could be as late as 67 AD).

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## Summary

Simon-Peter emerges as key eye-witness to the events of Jesus life. He is a natural leader and is emotionally driven - he leads with his heart and head catches up. As we follow him through the Gospels and beyond we see him grow into the fullness of the prophetic calling which Jesus spoke over him the first time they met.

## A final little aside

The name Simon means 'listener' but Jesus saw 'the rock' in him. Simon Peter was interrupted by each person of the Trinity!

- At the transfiguration – The Father interrupts Peter speaking and says, 'This is my Son – Listen to Him' (Matthew 17:4-5)
- In Matthew 16:22, Peter is telling Jesus what He should do and Jesus interrupts him to say, 'Get behind me Satan!'
- And finally, when Peter is in the midst of preaching in house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on him (Acts 10:44).

**Jesus looks at Simon and sees something in Him. Simon: listener . You are going to be a rock. Will see this developing going through the Gospels**

- **Preaches on 1<sup>st</sup> evang**
- **Leads Jerusalem**
- **Oversees appointing of Apostels**
- **Commision those at Antioch etc.**
- 
- **will see in more detail**