

Podcast Episode 81: Peter

Today, Denver addresses topics connected with the apostle Peter, including keys, practices of early Christians, the Mount of Transfiguration, and more.

DENVER: There's a difference between belief and unbelief. Belief means that you have a body of correct information from which to draw in reaching your conviction concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. Unbelief simply means that you're drawing upon information that is either incomplete, inaccurate, or outright false.

So, with those questions in mind— How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? **Who** can send? In the Apostle Paul's series of declarations— WHO? Who can send? HOW can they be sent? There were no theological seminaries. There were no doctorates of theology. There was no doctorate of divinity.

It's the Catholics who believe and rely on Paul's questions to justify *their* claims. They claim to have an unbroken line of authority, traceable to Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom were given by Christ. If you are a Protestant, do the keys of the kingdom matter? If you are a Catholic, *what are* the keys of the kingdom given Peter; and how confident are you that those can be transferred *at all*, since Peter got them from Christ directly? And if they can be transferred, how confident are you that they have survived, intact, today?

Protestants and Catholics must both face the question of whether salvation can be obtained apart from the Roman Catholic Church. But Paul asserts a different point, and asks a different question. Catholics and Protestants alike recognize Paul's authority and right to claim that he represented Christ. Paul's conversion, however, was not based on Peter. It was not based on a preacher who was sent to him. It was not dependent upon the keys of the kingdom given to Peter. Paul asserted he was an apostle, but his calling did not come because of a transfer of authority to him by Peter. He was called by God. He begins the first few words of his epistle to the Galatians: *Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)* (Galatians 1:1; see also Galatians 1:1RE).

Was Paul therefore sent? By whom was he sent? You think it obvious, no doubt, but the principle is critical to finding true faith in Jesus Christ. *He is the same* yesterday, today, and forever. If Paul was an apostle because Christ sent him—not men, or man—then for a preacher to be sent to preach the truth, the same should be required today as then. If Christ does not require the same, then Christ has changed, and we know that cannot be true for He is the same forever. If, therefore, a preacher must be sent, then Christ must do the sending. Then the *only* preacher you should heed must be one who declares plainly that he has been sent by God. That *was* the claim of Joseph Smith. It was a claim that ultimately cost

his life. It was a claim that, given the hardship through which he passed, and the perils that he faced, and the betrayals that happened, and the lies that have been told by people who have profited by using his name, it is a claim that I believe and I accept.

Another example of one who was sent by God is John the Baptist, who is clearly identified in these words: *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John* (John 1:6; see also John 1:2 RE). Christ's apostles likewise were sent by Him, according to the New Testament. Christ said, *I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go forth bringing forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain* (John 15:16; see also John 9:11 RE). Everyone sent by Christ to preach in the New Testament were given their message from Him. They were sent by Him. Joseph Smith declared he was likewise sent. I would invite you to investigate his claim and see whether it persuades you.

Today—and I say these words advisedly, and I want you to take them seriously— Today all Christian churches have become corrupt. They love money more, and acquiring financial security and church buildings more, than caring for the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. The institutions claiming to be the church of God are all polluted by the cares of the world. I want you to understand what I mean by that. During the apostolic era, there was no such thing as a Christian church building. Christians met in homes. They did not collect and compensate ministers. They gathered money and they used it to help the poor and the needy among them.

Peter taught that Christians would progress in godliness until the Christian has his or her calling and election made sure:

That by these [things] ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. [Besides] this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall [be neither] barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. (2 Peter 1:4-10; see also 2 Peter 1:1-3 RE)

Justin Martyr lived from 110-165 A.D. and he wrote in the Sub-apostolic Age. His writings give us a glimpse into how Christianity functioned in its earliest days. In his *First Apology* he describes Christian worship. They met in homes, having no church buildings. Before being considered a Christian, a candidate was baptized “In the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and...our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit” (*First Apology*, Chapter LXI, Christian Baptism).

Meetings began with a prayer and “[saluting] one another with a kiss.” Then sacrament was prepared and administered using a “cup of wine mixed with water” and bread, which is

blessed by “[giving] praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands” (Ibid., Chapter LXV, Administration of the Sacraments).

The early Christians recognized there was an obligation for “the wealthy among us [to] help the needy.” Therefore, after reading scripture and “the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets,” donations were collected (Ibid., Chapter LXVII, Weekly Worship of the Christians). Then the donations were distributed to help those who were poor or needy among that group of Christians.

These simple observances were resilient enough to preserve Christianity after the death of the apostles and before any great hierarchical magisterium arose. It was the power of baptism, the sacrament, scripture study, and financial aid among believers that gave Christianity its power. But it was diffused, and therefore incapable of destruction.

When Justin Martyr was slain, the scattered Christians continued, unaffected. It was just like when Peter and Paul were slain, and before them, James was killed. The power of Christianity reckoned from the vitality of its original roots. These roots were in Christ, His message, His teachings; which were employed to relieve one another by the alms shared from rich to poor.

When a centralized hierarchy took control over Christianity, the money that was used for the poor, the widows, and orphans was diverted to build churches, cathedrals, basilicas and palaces. Ultimately, the wealth generated by the generosity of Christian believers became the tool used by the hierarchy to buy up armies, kings, lands, and treasures, which were used to rule and reign as a cruel master over a subjugated population—made miserable by the abuse heaped on them from Rome.

Even after the Protestant Reformation, Christianity continued to be ruled by hierarchies. Cathedrals and church buildings consumed—and consume—resources that are to be used to help the poor. Christ built no building, although He accepted the temple in Jerusalem as His Father’s house. Peter built no church building, nor Paul, nor James, nor John. Christianity in the hands of the Lord and His apostles needed no brick and mortar for its foundation. It was built on the hearts of believers, brought together by the charity and assistance shared between them.

Petrine Christians: These were followers of a tradition that could be traced to Peter. These Christians emphasized authority and viewed their leaders as shepherds over exiles from heaven. It was the Petrine tradition that led to hierarchical control, as a central feature of the later kind of Christianity that survived. Peter’s original teachings evolved and changed, and Peter can’t be held accountable for what occurred in a corrupted system. As it evolved, sheep—that is, believers—followed bishops, who were the successors to the apostles. These bishops were believed to hold a commission to lead the flock.

Because original Christianity was peacefully diverse, the differences found in the earliest forms are somewhat preserved in our New Testament. I got a question from the website; I'm reading you the question that came in: "Is it possible Paul and Jesus taught two different gospel messages? There is debate: such *is* the case, *or is it* Paul expressed the message differently than Jesus did? In other words, did Jesus elaborate more content and less terminology, justification, reconciliation, grace, et cetera, and Paul did the opposite? It seems Christ, Peter, James, and John's messages were sublime and easy to understand, whereas Paul's letters are difficult to understand and require fitting the pieces together."

So let's take a look at those two witnesses. Paul was a strict pharisee who followed the law. Paul persecuted Jesus' followers, even assisting when Stephen was killed for his testimony of Christ. He had a great many things to regret. Everything in his life before his conversion to Christ gave him a context for understanding Christ and Christ's message. Paul wanted grace, reconciliation, and justification because he needed these to have hope.

Peter was a fisherman, but he walked alongside Christ for years. He saw Christ heal the sick, heard Him bless the children, saw Him walk on water. He knew that storms were quieted by Christ's word. He saw the dead rise, and stood on the Mount of Transfiguration when the Father declared Christ was His Son.

Peter was as qualified a witness as Paul to testify Christ was the promised Messiah, but we cannot expect two witnesses with such different experiences, and from such different backgrounds as Peter's and Paul's, to provide us identical testimonies of Christ. Both Paul and Peter understood and explained Christianity according to their background experiences, training, and culture. So long as they agreed on Christ's doctrine and accepted Christ's law, that was enough. They were both Christian and provided us with truth.

I believe Christ has spent the last 500 years inspiring mankind to restore a more correct form of Christianity. He declared He would return again in glory to judge the world, but before His return many prophecies remain to be fulfilled. Almost the entire burden of prophecy focuses on two events: the First Coming of Christ and the Second Coming of Christ. And a great deal about the Second Coming of Christ will require that there be things that occur, prior to His return in glory, that will involve the restoration and the presence of those who speak in His name with authority—testimonies to be born. The world cannot be judged without an adequate prior warning being given. Even if the world is ignoring the message, it doesn't matter. God assumes the obligation to making clear His plans. He assumes the obligation of having the warning voice sound, and whether the world gives any heed or not, it doesn't matter. They've been warned and they will be judged.

One of the prophecies came through Peter. He declared:

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the

times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21; see also Acts 2:3 RE)

The time of refreshing—or restoring—promised to come from the presence of the Lord has, in fact, begun. Jesus Christ has been sent again to prepare for His return. I believe that Joseph Smith was an authentic messenger, called by Christ, to help *us* become more Christian. One message sent by Christ in 1829 explains more of what He, Christ, accomplished as the sacrificial Lamb who atoned for our sins. We know from Isaiah that by His stripes we are healed. God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, and the chastisement *we* earned was put upon Him. (See Isaiah 53:1-6 and Mosiah 14:1-5; see also Isaiah 19:2 RE and Mosiah 8:1-3 RE).

Traditionally, Christians have understood *that* to have been accomplished in the Roman beating, scourging, and crucifixion of Christ. However, many men suffered similarly at the hands of Rome. Christ suffered to remove our sins and repair the *fall* of mankind. Isaiah's description suggests that this was cosmic, and that Christ took the entire burden of mankind's sins upon Himself. Only Luke gives a glimpse into Christ's suffering in Gethsemane. Luke describes it in these words: *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground* (Luke 22:44; see also Luke 13:9 RE).

The way in which the blessings of Peter, James, and John, and the naming of Peter, James, and John, occurs on the Mount of Transfiguration— They went up and they were on the Holy Mount. They were endowed with knowledge. They saw the history of the world, right down to the end of time. They were given an insight into things. We learn about that in Doctrine and Covenants—I think it's 67, but it's in there, you can read it. (See D&C 63:20-21; see also T&C 50:5 RE). They were shown essentially everything because they saw what they saw. This was the reason why Peter negotiated a rapid resurrection. He didn't want to camp in the spirit world. And this is why John said, "Well, I don't want to go there, let me just stay here and I'll minister here." And they made choices as a result of the knowledge that they got on the Mount about what was going to happen down to the end of time. (See D&C 7:1-8; see also T&C Joseph Smith History 13:17-19 RE).

But, this is an order. Peter, and James, and John are symbols of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: grandfather, father, and son. And it was Jacob through whom the nations—the twelve tribes, the twelve nations of Israel—were established. And so John, he produced a righteous son. I don't know about the children of Katura, but Ishmael and Jacob have continued their bloodshed right down to this minute. Esau sold his birthright and the garment to Jacob, who presented it to Joseph. And he's the one through whom a great progeny developed.

Peter, James, and John— John is the one who remained to create, as a ministering angel, an analogous progeny—by his ministrations as a ministering angel through the ages. So, when you get to the names of Peter, James, and John in the restoration story, we don't have enough details of what happened to be able to correctly construct *exactly how* Peter, James,

and John fit within the restoration of the gospel in the last days. So, if we're going to put them into a context, I would not say that the reason that they came was in order to ordain someone, when that has a really good account provided to us in the account of the conference that happened in June of 1831. I described that in *A Man Without Doubt*, beginning on about page 19 and going through, well, the end of that section.

The folks that got ordained at that conference included five that Joseph Smith ordained: Lyman White, who was excommunicated in 1848; Harvey Whitlock, excommunicated in 1835; Thomas Marsh—who left the Church in 1838, signed an affidavit against Joseph which contributed to his imprisonment in Missouri—he was excommunicated in 1839; Parley Pratt, who apostatized and was excommunicated in 1842, but then reinstated in 1843. Those are the ones Joseph ordained.

The ones Lyman White ordained: John Whitmer, excommunicated 1838; Rigdon, excommunicated in 1844; Partridge, died in 1840; Ezra Thayer, refused to follow the Twelve after Joseph and Hyrum were martyred. (Well, that guy has some potential. [Laughs.]) Joseph Wakefield was excommunicated in January 1834. Ezra Boothe apostatized within months and went on to write anti-Mormon and anti-Joseph publications— And it just goes on; you can read it in there. It didn't work out as well as had been hoped.

The way in which, I would suggest, it would be best to understand is that they came, not for purposes of conferring priesthood—that would occur in June of 1831—but for reconnecting the genealogical line that required someone to be designated as descendants from “the Fathers”.

The promise made by Elijah is about reconnecting us to the Fathers. Joseph called them the Fathers in heaven. These are *not* our kindred dead because our kindred dead are required to be redeemed by us. These are the Fathers in heaven. Among them would be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and because of this dispensation being what it is, Peter, James, and John.

The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to allow you to see things in their true light, with the underlying intent behind them, and to allow you to do that without distortion and without confusion. The temple is a ceremony designed to teach you about the path back to God; the very same thing that the Book of Mormon teaches repeatedly. The path back to God is so that you can meet with and be instructed by our Savior. The purpose of our Savior is to prepare us in all things so that we can, at last, become Zion. Because if *your* heart is right and *my* heart is right, and if I'm looking to God and God only, and you're looking to God and God only, then the trivial things of having things in common are of *so little import* that they matter not.

If you're faithful to the Lord, you have no reason to pick a fight with anyone else. Our Lord was a peacemaker. We ought to be peacemakers as well. I have nothing but appreciation for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They publish the scriptures that make me wise to salvation. They build the temples in which we can go and learn about the

mysteries of God. They delivered to me, through the voice of some Utah boys—I mean they were about the same age as I was, but they were so young and naïve in my universe that I considered them boys—a testimony about the restoration of the gospel through the prophet Joseph Smith. And I have a stronger testimony of the restoration today than I did the day I was baptized. I believe it more fervently, and I know a great deal more about the mysteries of God than I ever thought possible.

I don't think I'm special. If you really knew enough about me to realize that this preaching is not the full definition of who I am, you would probably agree that you're better people than I am. But, I wanted to know *Him*. And I was willing to give away anything and everything; and I am still willing to give away anything and everything. There is *nothing* that I value above the Lord. And I hope that everyone here understands that statement.

If you want to know what one can accomplish without faith, but with an ordination to the priesthood, there's a whole discussion of that in *A Man without Doubt*—about the first attempt to distribute the highest order of priesthood in Joseph's day. There's a description of what an utter failure that was. In fact, it was so great a failure that what Joseph did was he backed up, and he started over again with trying to solve the problem. And the problem did not consist of priesthood, it consisted of the lack of faith. The Lectures on Faith are an attempt to create faith that will have power—which is separate from priesthood.

Men, women, and children can have faith. There was a time when the Mary Fielding story had *her* anointing her oxen and healing them. In the world of the correlated LDS model, she's now calling for the equivalent of Home Teachers to come anoint her oxen. Mary Fielding's *faith* was what healed the oxen.

Would you rather have priesthood without faith, or faith without priesthood? If you have faith, *everything else is possible*. Faith is what is lacking. It is the more important—and *not* this priesthood envy. (Oh, the trouble I could get into by going too far.)

Look, at the end of the day, Peter did not hold any greater or different authority when he came back from a mission and said, "We couldn't cast out any devils. We're bringing this person to you, Lord. Whatever it was you gave us, whatever that ordination thing was, it's just not working." And then Christ said, "Well, this kind come not out except by fasting and prayer." (See Matthew 17:14-21; see also Matthew 9:6-7 RE). Meaning that there is a work to be done to subordinate the body, in order to give the strength to your faith—*necessary* to achieve something.

Peter had absolutely no different ordination than when he entered the temple following the Lord's resurrection, and said, *Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I [unto you]: In the name of Jesus Christ...[arise, take up your bed] and walk* (Acts 3:1-8; see also Acts 2:1 RE). What Peter had that was *different* was faith. His ordination amounted to no power, but his faith in Christ healed the sick. And that is not controlled by institutions. That is not controlled by ordination. If you want to know how it's controlled, study the Lectures on

Faith, and then listen to what Lisa had to say this morning because she was right on the money.

Zion will require a worthy people. There's a second general epistle as we've got it preserved for us in Peter 2—Second Peter—in which he talks about what he would like to see. I am going to begin at verse 5:

[Besides] this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they [shall] make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-7; see also 2 Peter 1:2 RE)

This was a great admonition, and this is a great path. And I think Peter thought this through because he knew that this was a progression, that actually follows in almost this order, in almost every life. However, those Saints of that day did not have Zion despite this admonition. Therefore, if you are going to see it in your day, you have to do something more. We have to be more holy than were they. We have to be more disciplined than were they. You see, the word 'discipline' and the word 'disciple' come from the same word. We need to have *greater* virtue than they did.

The Savior is extraordinarily positive; and when He speaks negatively, it's at those moments that I want to pay particular attention and give some careful consideration. One of the spots in which—in 3rd Nephi, in His visit with the Nephites at Bountiful—He spoke quite negatively, He attributed the content of His pessimistic prophecy to the Father; and noted that the reason why He was stating it was because the Father had told Him to. This is in 3rd Nephi chapter 16, verse 10:

*And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: [is how He prefaces His direful assessment of the latter-day gentiles]. At that day when the Gentiles **shall** sin against my gospel, and **shall** reject the fulness of my gospel, and **shall** be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations...above all the people of the whole earth, and **shall** be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and [of] all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts [and then He goes on from there]...and shall reject...behold, saith the Father [this is Christ attributing what the Father has told Him as the source for His message], I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them. (3 Nephi 16:10; see also 3 Nephi 7:5 RE; emphasis added)*

In that list, we all can make a self-assessment about a variety of things. But the fact that He included, within the list of the defects of the last-day gentiles, the word 'priestcrafts,' ought to alarm every one of us. Because priestcraft, when it gets defined in the Book of Mormon, is something that I think all are tempted to engage in. Peter was equally concerned, and in his first Epistle [chapter] 5, verses 2 and 3, he wrote: *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; **not for filthy lucre**, but of a*

ready mind; Neither as being lords over the [Lord's] heritage, but being ensamples [unto] the flock (1 Peter 5:2-3; see also 1 Peter 1:19 RE; emphasis added).

It is not appropriate that someone should collect money from the flock, nor "lord it over the flock." Priestcraft is one of those toxic failures of the last-day gentiles—that we have to guard against it appearing among us, as well.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: What's your stance on multiple mortal probations or reincarnation?

DENVER: Dude... [audience laughs]. Multiple mortal probations is probably (let me put it this way)—even if true—a distraction from the test that is presently underway. There are living today, that I've encountered, at least a dozen Peters; I mean like Peter, New Testament Peter, back here again doing his thing. None of *those* fish, though [laughs]. I've met a handful of Johns. I've met four or five Mary Magdalenes. I've met at least three Mother Marys. Okay, so, assuming one of them actually nailed it and they *are* that, what's that got to do with the price of cheese in Wisconsin? How is it going to help you? Are you honest, are you kind, are you charitable? "No, dude, I'm Peter! I mean, once, long ago and far away, I walked on water briefly and I sank. But dude, I did it—and you haven't. So okay, watch me sprint into a pool and I'll accomplish kind of the same thing. I'll stay up for a little—" What's it got to do with anything? Yes, maybe there's something to it; probably not in the form in which most people, who believe in it, believe in it.

What's the definition of a creation? How often in a creation does one appear? If you look carefully at the scriptures, the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration talking with Christ are given a fulsome vision of everything that is now going to unfold, on into the future. And, these are the disciples; this is Peter, James, and John standing there on the Mount. They look at this, and they look upon the long absence of their spirit from their bodies and they regard it as a form of prison, and so they figure out an escape route. I mean, it's in the scriptures. John says, "Don't send me there, let me stay in this arena and do battle here." And Peter and James—it's actually Jacob—James say, "Let us come speedily into your kingdom," meaning, don't leave us there; resurrect us. They will miss the resurrection because the first resurrection was when Christ came out of the grave, and they were going to die *after* that. Therefore, they were left there. They said, "No, don't leave us there." And so, they secured an early resurrection; so they're not in the spirit world. (See D&C 7:1-8; see also T&C Joseph Smith History 13:17-19 RE).

If a long time in the spirit world is not part of the agenda, then they had no reason to take that up as an issue and have that discussion with the Lord, and make the choices they did. Therefore, if multiple mortalities is like, you know, on Wednesday I die and on Monday I'll be resurrected or reborn as someone else, then there is no long absence of the spirit from the body—there is a continual return. But then you get into the definition of creation, and how many creations have there been for this world, and topics about which even Joseph kept his mouth shut; and so, I'll put a cork in it.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1, given in Cerritos, California on September 21, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2, given in Dallas, Texas on October 19, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled "The Holy Order," given in Bountiful, Utah on October 29, 2017;
- A fireside talk on "The Temple," given in Ogden, Utah on October 28th, 2012;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, Idaho on September 11, 2016;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10, entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, Arizona on September 9, 2014;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, Utah on April 10th, 2016; and
- His talk entitled "Other Sheep Indeed," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, Utah on July 29th, 2017.

Today's podcast addresses important questions about Peter and keys, but is only an introduction to ideas that listeners of any denomination may find important and relevant. These topics are more fully addressed in Denver's talk entitled "[Authority, Keys and Kingdom](#)," given in Sandy, Utah on July 14, 2019.