

=LIFE OF PETER=

Lesson 12

Peter Dies

AIM: to teach my pupils the nature of death for the Christian through studying the last chapter in the life of Peter.

POINT OF CONTACT: Discuss with your class: The vast majority of people have moved one time or another from one residence to another. What preparations have to be made for moving day? A destination has been determined, a means of transporting possessions and people has to be obtained, the key to the old residence has to be left, a new neighborhood has to be learned. What does moving do to the people who are planning to live at a new address? They will still be the same people; their personalities will no doubt be the same as they had been at the old location. How will they leave their old house? It could be left dirty or clean; old neighborhood obligations could be left fulfilled or unfinished.

INTRODUCTION: A short review would be in order for this last lesson on the life of Peter. Peter had been an uneducated man who had made a living for himself, his wife, and his mother-in-law by being a partner in a large fishing business on the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. One day Peter was introduced to Jesus by Andrew, Peter's brother. Peter immediately learned that Jesus knew all about him—his personality and his potential. Upon Jesus' command to Peter that he should come and follow Him, Peter was quick to act. It was revealed to Peter early in his association with Jesus that Jesus is the Son of God. Of this fact Peter was quick to testify. Peter had to learn not to have confidence in himself, but to place all his trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus to accomplish through him the work which God wanted him to do. Peter saw the power of the name of Jesus as he set out to be an apostle for Him. Peter lived rich and fruitful years after the ascension of Jesus—about thirty-eight years after that. Now we have come to a study of the close of Peter's life. Let us learn from both his life and his death so that we may please Christ more with our lives—however long or short they may be!

I. PETER WAS AWARE OF HIS COMING DEATH. See II Peter 1:14.

1. He knew the manner of his death.

1) He knew that he would be put to death. Jesus had indicated to him that he was to be crucified. John 21:18, 19. A person who was to be crucified had his arms outstretched, his hands and feet bound to the cross. Peter's hands would be stretched forth, not as they had been in swimming when the Lord had spoken the prediction of Peter's death, but in a more painful manner. His hands would be stretched forth on the transverse beam of the cross. He would be lifted up on the cross after his own garments would be taken from him. Peter would be left to die in shame. The executioner would have girded him only with the cords that would hold him to the cross. (It is said that Peter was crucified with his head downwards and his feet upwards because he alleged himself to be unworthy of being crucified in the same manner as his Lord.)

2) It was at the hands of the Romans. Because of his faithfulness to preaching the Gospel, Peter had aroused the extreme anger of the political as well as the religious leaders of his day. Peter, being the leader of the apostles, had been an irritation to the king. When Herod Agrippa killed James, the brother of John, he saw that the Jewish leaders were pleased, so he decided to set in motion plans to kill Peter also. Acts 12:2, 3. This attitude toward Peter and other apostles prevailed into the reign of other Roman rulers. (The Roman rulers attained their positions many times through treachery and murder and were therefore very jealous of any person who could gain the popularity and loyalty of the people. Peter had been imprisoned twice and miraculously released. Nero would have him put to death.) Peter died in A.D. 68.

2. He knew the time. II Peter 1:14. As the time drew close, Peter knew that it would not be long until he would have to die. It is said that he was an old man at the time of his execution. The Lord lets some people know when their time is coming to die. King Hezekiah knew it. Isaiah 38:1.

3. He knew the characteristics of death.

1) Peter knew that death is the putting-off of the earthly body. He referred to death by saying, "I must put off this my tabernacle." Paul also spoke of our bodies as being tabernacles. II Corinthians 5:1-7. (A tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place, one from which one could be moved until it was set up in another place.)

- 2) Peter knew that being absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. II Corinthians 5:8 instructs us that, for the Christian, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Death for Peter was moving day from earth to Heaven because he possessed the salvation which Jesus gives when people trust Him as their Saviour. The Holy Spirit within him, as within every Christian, would be the “quickening” agent Which would raise his living spirit into Heaven to be with Christ. Romans 8:11. We are instructed in I Corinthians 3:16 that the bodies of Christians are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

II. PETER KNEW THAT HIS DEATH WOULD GLORIFY GOD.

1. Jesus had said that it would. John 21:19.
2. Peter’s death would glorify God because he would go willingly to die. His death would be proof of the love which he had confessed for Jesus. Even in the face of threats upon his life for preaching about Jesus, Peter did not stop preaching about Him.
3. The way that a person meets death indicates his inner life. When Peter and other martyrs marched stedfastly through history to their death, the observers present knew that there was something to the Gospel which they had been preaching and living. “The truths of God, which they died in the defense of, are hereby confirmed,” someone has said. Who really wishes to die? Perhaps there is no one who really wishes to die, but death holds no dread and no fear for the Christian. Jesus is with the Christian in death as well as in life. Psalm 23:4. (Not only can the Christian who is meeting death glorify God, but the Christian family of the dying or deceased can glorify God. In special service in India, there was an American Air Force pilot who lived there with his wife. One day the plane which he was flying crashed. The pilot was mortally injured. When word came to his wife that he had been rushed to the hospital in hopeless condition, she was at first physically violently ill and emotionally torn. Then she thought, “How must my reaction appear to the Indian man who has been sent to bring me to the hospital? My husband and I have been witnessing to him as well as others of the eternal life that is to be found in Jesus, and now I am acting as if Jesus did not exist.” She immediately regained composure and rode to the hospital where she saw her husband draw his last breath on earth. By the life which he had lived as he kept Bible verses part of his daily log and by the days which she lived immediately upon his death, the Indians and the Americans to whom they had both been witnessing could see that truly death can glorify God.)

III. PETER KNEW THAT HE SHOULD REMAIN BUSY UNTIL HIS DEATH. See II Peter 1:12, 13.

1. Jesus had given him a job to do. His job was to feed the lambs and the sheep belonging to Jesus, and Peter was busy about his Master’s work right up to the time of his death. John 21:15-17.
2. Peter reminded the lambs of the precious faith which they had obtained. I Peter 1:3-9. (The “lambs” would be new Christians.)
3. Peter fed the sheep. He put them in remembrance of how they should all add to their faith. II Peter 1:5-7. He fed them the Word of God. He reminded them that they should trust the Word of God which the prophets had written and that they should trust his word about Jesus. (The “sheep” would be older Christians.)

IV. PETER KNEW THAT HE HAD A LEGACY TO LEAVE.

1. He left a warning to the Christians. He told them to beware of false teachers and prophets. II Peter 2.
2. He passed the Great Commission on to them. He reminded them that they should be concerned that the unsaved hear the Gospel. II Peter 3:9.
3. He gave them a look into the future. He told them of a new Heaven and a new earth that would be created. II Peter 3:11-13.
4. He told them to be diligent about growing to be mature Christians. II Peter 3:14-18.

CONCLUSION: Death, for the Christian, is like moving day. It is a mere transition from earth to Heaven. Sometimes it is accompanied with suffering, sometimes with undeserved shame. For each Christian, however, death can do no more to him than a shadow can.