

PETER, AN ORDINARY MAN

In Matthew 16 Simon Peter confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In response to Peter's act of faith Jesus told him that he would give him the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:17-19). On Pentecost Sunday after our Lord had risen from the dead, Peter was given the privilege of preaching the first gospel sermon (Acts 2). What an honor! Let's ask ourselves some questions at this point. What was so special about Peter that caused the Lord to give him the keys of the kingdom and to give him the honor of preaching the first gospel sermon? Who would you and I have chosen? Would we have chosen the smartest, most popular, best looking, richest, most prestigious, silver and honey tongued person available, someone with degrees, research publications, and the best possible debater that is an expert in Greek and Hebrew? Let us turn to the scriptures and examine Peter's life and draw some conclusions.

First, let's examine the background of Peter. In Mark 3:14 we note that the Lord ordained twelve so that he could send them out and preach. Peter was one of them. In Mark 3:16, the Lord changed his surname to Peter (Greek petros for "rock"). In the John 1:42 we also find Peter's name rendered as "Cephas" (Syriac name meaning "stone"). Occasionally, the names Peter and Simon are used together in the gospels (John 1:40). Peter's father's name was Bar-Jona (Matt 16:17) or it can be rendered as Jona (John 21:16). Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen (Mat 4:18). At one point Peter had lived in the city of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee (John 1:44). Later on he lived in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-29). Simon Peter was married; (Mark 1:30, I Corinthians 9:5) therefore he couldn't have been a "pope". Peter learned of Christ from his brother Andrew who had been a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-41). In John 1:40 we see that Peter's public identity overshadowed that of his brother Andrew. In this verse Andrew was referred to as "*Simon Peter's brother.*" It appears that Peter held a leadership position among the twelve disciples. Simon Peter's name is first in the lists of the disciples' names (Matthew 10:2, Mark 3:16, Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13).

Let us now turn our attention to Peter's weaker side. Peter had a zealous heart filled with emotion and love (phileo). Peter's zeal without knowledge (ignorance) made him a ready instrument for Satan's bidding. Zeal without the Lord's will leads to death: "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the*

end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Jesus told his disciples how that he must suffer, be killed, and resurrected. Instead of accepting what the Lord told them, Peter took it on himself to instruct the Lord: "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matthew 16:22). Jesus turned to Peter in verse 23 and said "...Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men." It does not matter how much emotion and zeal we have if we are not directed by the word of God! Peter's faith became weak while he was walking on water. He cried to the Lord to save him when he began to sink. We read in Matthew 14:31 "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The Apostle Peter was at the transfiguration of our Lord. He also got to witness Jesus talking with Moses and Elias. He allowed his emotions to get the best of him. He wanted to build tabernacles for the three of them. This was a serious offense unto God. God didn't even wait for Peter to finish speaking before he rebuked him. "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). Simon Peter told Jesus in the upper room that he (Jesus) wasn't going to wash his feet. Jesus told him "...if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." (John 13:8). In the next verse Peter instructed the Lord once more: "...Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." In Matthew 26 Peter thought he was really brave. Once more, his emotions got the best of him. He spoke without thinking. He told Jesus that even though others would be offended because of him, he (Peter) would not be. Again, our friend Peter instructed the Lord. And this time he got a bit self-righteous. In so many words he told Jesus that he was different from other men. In Matthew 26:34, "Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Peter went to the limit of his zeal and contradicting Jesus words in verse 35, "Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." Prior to the denial, Peter was rebuked for falling asleep (Mark 14:37).

Does Simon Peter sound like someone that we would select to preach the first gospel sermon, one of the most important and historic sermons ever? I am terribly afraid that many of us would take it on ourselves to perhaps instruct the Lord in zeal without knowledge. We might very well tell Jesus that Peter is certainly not the man for the job. Many, I'm afraid, look to the

outward appearance when selecting someone for important church work. Many, many times the humble, poor, not so very "pretty", not so very gifted with words, and least esteemed among us are overlooked for work in the church. Yes, Peter was the very man for the job that the Lord gave him. The Lord looks at the heart of the person and not the outward appearance. *"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). In Peter's earliest days of working with Jesus he made a lot of mistakes. But, Peter was very humble! He always admitted his faults and repented. After he preached the first sermon on Pentecost Sunday we see a more mature person. As he grew stronger in faith and knowledge his mistakes became fewer in number. He still made mistakes but he always fixed them! As Peter preached the very first sermon of the New Covenant, the humblest and least esteemed person(s) you know would have been prime candidates for preaching the first sermon if their heart(s) were guided by God's will, meek, and repentant. It's not a matter of "if" we make mistakes but "when" and if we admit them and repent of them.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Is it scriptural for Christians to meditate?

ANSWER: It might come as a surprise to many but the answer to the above question is yes. The practice of meditation is not something that you hear discussed among us but it should be. In fact, not only should we meditate but it should be noted that we are commanded to do so.

The reason that we do not hear much on the subject is two-fold. First, as the question posed demonstrates, not many Christians are aware that meditation is a commandment. Another reason is that meditation has received a bum rap because of its use and abuse in Eastern religions like Hinduism or Buddhism.

But regardless of what other religions teach the Bible plainly commands us as God's children to meditate.

Paul writes:

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is anything praise worthy—meditate on these things"
(Philippians 4:8 NKJ)

Here we find that Paul clearly teaches us that there are things that we are to meditate on. But this raises other questions that must be explored. We now turn our attention to the first of these, which is "what does meditation mean when used Biblically".

We begin by stating that Christian meditation is not the kind of mediation practiced by Eastern religions mentioned above or transcendental meditation that was popular a few years ago. These types of meditation conjure up images in our minds of people sitting with legs crossed and humming or chanting some sort of mystic lyric. We also want to point out that the practice of some "Christian mystics" who meditate in order to have some sort of God experience is not what Paul had in mind. All of these mentioned above usually suggest emptying the mind in order to receive some inner truth or revelation from God or some deity.

True meditation does not suggest emptying the mind in order to receive a revelation. But rather, it means quite the opposite. Meditation in the Biblical sense means to dwell upon or be thinking about some truth or reality that is already revealed. It is objective in that we deliberately think upon things that God has already said and revealed in His word!

Take for example David in the book of Psalms. Over and over again his writings demonstrate that he thought upon the Lord and all of His wonderful works. He also dwelt upon the revealed word.

Paul told us not to empty our minds but rather to fill them with thought of things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. This was commanded that we might gain understanding of God and His revealed will. Remember meditation in the Biblical sense does not seek some unrevealed truth. It is designed to nourish the spiritual man and to give joy and strength to those who do so. This is the difference between true meditation and those mentioned previously.

As noted above, true meditation is vitally important to our growth as a child of God. In addition to dwelling on revealed truth that is designed to give us joy and strength, it is also part of the transformation process.

The Bible teaches us that we are being transformed into the image of Christ. Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 18 writes,

"But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

This transformation is what the Christian life is all about. We all are in the process of putting off the old man and being renewed in the image of Him who died for us. This transformation is possible only by renewing our minds. Note the following:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable will God." (Romans 12:1-2)

Renewing our minds involves choosing to meditate (think) on the correct things. As Paul put it we must learn to set our minds on things above and not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)

Only when our minds are set on things above will we be successful in the transformation process. Failing to set our minds on things above is why so many people fail in their Christian walk. They mind the things of the flesh rather than the things of the Spirit.

Paul instructs us in Romans 8:5-8,

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, not indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Here we see it is our choice as to what we set our minds on. Set them on the world or on things spiritual. This is why we are told to meditate upon the things of God.

Our minds are powerful things. It is affected by what we think. If we spend our time in contemplation on negative and sinful things then we will be negative and sinful in our actions. Our actions flow from what is in our hearts. This is why transformation is so important and can only be accomplished by what we choose to dwell on.

Thus one can plainly see that meditation is not only proper but expected from the child of God.

SAM DICK
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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Sept. 7- 9	Dowell Hill Columbus, IN.	Danny Abercrombie (Gay, GA)
Sept. 7- 9	Fayetteville Road Congregation Fairburn, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
Sept. 15 4:00 P.M. Singing 6:00 P.M. Dinner & Fellowship	Oak Grove Congregation Woodland, AL	Singing and Fellowship
Sept. 14 - 16	Antioch Church Livingston, TN	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
Sept. 17 - 21	Mt. Zion Congregation Crab Orchard, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 17 - 21	Hopkinsville Congregation Hopkinsville, OH (near Cincinnati, OH)	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
Sept. 21 - 23	Pleasant Ridge Congregation Woodbury , TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Sept. 24 - 28	Estesburg Congregation Eubank, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Sept. 28 - 30	Willow Oaks Congregation Russell Springs, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

Sept.
28 – 30

Verona Congregation
Verona, KY

Joe Hill
(Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What did Isaac and the herdsmen of Gerar quarrel over in the Valley of Gerar?
2. What did Boaz give Ruth to take back to Naomi?
3. To whom was Isaiah's first prophecy directed?
4. According to Luke, Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and was handed the book of which prophet?
5. What did the church at Thessalonica turn to God from?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. How many people were on the roof of the temple when Samson demolished it? THREE THOUSAND MEN AND WOMEN (Judges 16:27)
2. According to Psalms 24, what is the Lord's? THE EARTH AND ALL ITS FULLNESS (Psalms 24:1)
3. Whom did Jesus commend for having the greatest faith in Israel? A CENTURION IN CAPERNAUM (Matthew 8:5-10)
4. What advice did Paul give to the Roman Christians regarding people who caused divisions among them? AVOID THEM (Romans 16:17)
5. According to Revelation, at the pouring out of the sixth bowl, what great river dries up? THE EUPHRATES (Revelation 16:12)