

Episode 21. "The Life and Death of Peter."

Tuesday, September 14, 2021. 43 Minutes Long.

The story of Peter, the most misunderstood apostle. Tells how his brother introduced him to Jesus, how Jesus named him "Peter" and moved into his house to perform miracles. Tells why Peter was crucified upside down at a racetrack, and why tourists today walk over his grave without knowing it.

Owen Allen (00:00):

Owen Allen opens the episode by saying:

Owen (00:13):

Well, hello my friends! This is Episode 21 of our bi-weekly series of "Saving Christianity," coming to you every-other-Tuesday from Christian Family Online. I'm Owen Allen, your host for this episode, and greetings to all of you out there in Podcast Land – whatever you're doing, and wherever you are. Just remember that we love you, and we're doing our best to bring you some peace, healing, and hope. Now, in a previous episode – it was actually Episode 19 – I told the dramatic story of the apostle Paul because I said my co-host, John Shields, and I, feel that since we talk so much about Paul and Peter in these podcast episodes, we ought to give our friends out in Podcast Land a break and let them know more about these two amazing people in Christian history. So here in Episode 21, it's time now to talk about Peter.

Owen (01:21):

So the title of this episode is: "The Life and Death of Peter." (Repeats.) Once again, I'm sure you've heard the name "Peter" many times from pastors in the pulpit. But like me when I was growing up, you may not have a clear idea who he actually was or what he actually did. So you're going to enjoy, I hope, the surprising facts in this episode. Peter's life and death are every bit as dramatic – and maybe even slightly *more* dramatic – than the apostle Paul's life and death. So without further ado, let's get started. Now, like the apostle Paul, the apostle Peter is one of the best known of the Early Christian apostles. And by the way, you'll remember from Episode 19 that that word "apostle" ... which we don't really use today ... but in the First Century, that was a term that meant someone who was being sent out as an ambassador, so to speak, or a messenger, so to speak, to other cities and other lands to give people the message of Christianity.

Owen (02:34):

And that's what Paul and Peter did. But the problem is that in addition to all of that, Peter is also one of the most *misunderstood* of the Early Christian apostles. Even more so than Paul. So in this episode, we have two goals, actually: First, to give you some facts about Peter that you may not have heard and may not know. But secondly, to correct that big misunderstanding that so many people have about Peter. But why don't we start, as we did with Paul, by talking about

where Peter was born. Actually, he was born about 3 AD in Bethsaida ("beth-SAY'-duh"), a small fishing village on the Northern shore of Lake Galilee. It's interesting that in Hebrew, "Beth-" means "house of." So *Bethsaida* means "house of fishing," The same way for example that *Bethlehem* in the Christmas story means "house of bread." Bethsaida's important, though.

Owen (03:37):

Think about this, now. The first *five* disciples – we know that Jesus had 12 original disciples – the first five of them were all born and raised there in Bethsaida. They included *two* sets of brothers, weirdly enough. And all of them were long-term professional fishermen – fisher folk, with their parents and their grandparents before them. Here are the names of those first five disciples that (error, *Jesus*) recruited. All of them from Bethsaida:

Owen (04:10):

Of course Peter. And Peter's younger brother, Andrew, whom we'll talk about just a second. And then two more brothers, James and John, who were actually Peter's and Andrew's best friends and fishing partners. And then, the fifth disciple, a man by the name of Philip, also from Bethsaida, also a professional fisher person. Now, I've walked the streets of the ruins of Bethsaida, and I'm including some pictures here of it in this transcript.



Ruins of the City of Bethsaida showing the city gate, city wall, and ruins of homes

Owen (04:47):

You can see them, of course, by going to our website and pulling up this episode at: www.goSCpod.com. You'll actually see the cobblestone street leading into the city ruins from Lake Galilee, where the five disciples fished all day and often all night. And you can see the ruins of the city gate, and the city wall, and even some of the homes. In fact, I'm including a picture of the ruins of one of the homes in Bethsaida. It could even be the remains of Peter's and Andrew's childhood home there. We don't know of course. But it could be. Now, while we're talking about Peter's birthplace, let's talk about his birth name. Peter's parents gave him the name

Simon bar Jona. Which in Hebrew means, "Simon, the son of Jona." *Bar* means "the son of." But interestingly enough, his family didn't really speak Hebrew. In those days all Jewish people spoke Aramaic. ("air-uh-MAY'-ick")



Ruins of a home in Bethsaida that could have been where Peter and his brother Andrew grew up

Owen (05:57):

And that was a Hebrew dialect learned when they were in captivity centuries before. And that was their daily language that they spoke in the family and privately. And here's what's interesting. Peter and his family ... as did, by the way, the other disciples including Jesus ... but Peter and his family spoke Aramaic with a *slurring accent* that identified them as being from Israel's Northern Province of Galilee and the Lake Galilee area. I'll just say it's sort of like a New York accent, or a Southern accent, today. They had that strong accent, and that identified them when they were in Jerusalem. But in addition to all of that, Peter's also called "Simon Peter" in the Scriptures. And he has a fourth name coming up here in a second. So he actually had *four* different names. I believe he's the only disciple of Jesus's original 12 that had four names.

Owen (07:05):

His names were Simon bar Jonah. Simon-Peter. Peter. And Cephas ("SEE'-fuss"), as we'll see in just a moment. But to keep this episode simple, let's just call him *Peter*. Now as we said, Peter was a commercial fisherman – a lifetime fisherman. So let's talk about commercial fishing in the First Century for just a second. Peter and his younger brother, Andrew, with their best friends, James and John, were all partners in a fishing business on Lake Galilee. And you know, it's amazing, Lake Galilee is not a big lake at all. It's eight miles wide, and 13 miles long. But it had a thriving (fishing) industry in the First Century. In fact, it does today. But not as big as then (chuckles). Over 250 boats a day could be out on the lake in First Century times. You just see a handful of boats out on the lake today.

Owen (08:16):

But I have a picture, a very interesting picture, of the remains of a First Century fishing boat that's been excavated and pulled up out of the mud of Lake Galilee. I'm including it here in the script. It's the actual type of boat that Peter and his partners used, and the type that Jesus sailed in. It was raised by scientists, and it could have actually belonged to Peter and his partners. It could even be one of the boats that Jesus sailed in at times out on Lake Galilee. It's amazing. But let's continue with Peter's story. When they reached adulthood, Peter and Andrew left Bethsaida. Never went back. And they moved six miles south on Lake Galilee to the town of Capernaum ("cuh-PURR'-knee-umm"). And they did that because Capernaum, of course, was a richer, bigger, more influential city, or town, than the village of Bethsaida. In fact, in Hebrew, it's interesting, the word *Capernaum* means "town of comfort." (Repeats.) And we'll come back to that. But their three best friends, oddly enough, James, John, and Philip, followed them, and also moved to Capernaum.



Remains of a First Century Lake Galilee fishing boat of the type Peter owned. It's 27 feet long and seven feet wide. It's made of cedar using pegs and nails. It was operated by both oars and sails. Jesus may have sailed in this boat

Owen (09:29):

So now we have five rough and tough fishermen from the village of Bethsaida now living in the town of Capernaum. And they're about to meet Jesus and they're about to become His disciples. But first, let's say that in those days Capernaum was an important trading and fishing town of about 2,000 residents. We don't know the exact number. Could have been more than that. And they always had several hundred travelers and visitors constantly passing through in camel caravans and staying for a few days each time. The reason for that was Capernaum is actually located on the famous *Via Maris* trade route. You'll read about that in history books. And so the town

had a large synagogue ...which, by the way, we know that Jesus taught in occasionally, you'll read that in the New Testament ... had a detachment of Roman soldiers and Roman officers lived there.

Owen (10:33):

And of course, there were dozens of visitors, and various kinds of industries, all on this trade – caravan – route traveling north and south in Israel. And all the camel caravans and donkey caravans had to stop there to rest and buy supplies and pay their taxes – which, you'll remember that the apostle, Matthew, originally collected taxes before Jesus recruited him. I've roamed the ruins of Capernaum and taken pictures of it. And I have a picture here in the transcript. You'll see how the ruin of the city looks today. You'll notice a quiet tropical setting with ruined houses all around. And then in the background of the picture, you can see the ruin of the synagogue where Jesus taught. But to get back to our story, Peter and his younger brother, Andrew, together with their fishing partners, were all living in Capernaum quietly as professional fishermen, when they met Jesus, and were recruited by Him as His first five disciples.



Ruins of Capernaum on Lake Galilee. Note the tropical setting and the ruins of houses in the foreground. The ruins of the synagogue where Jesus taught are in the background. It was on the famous Via Maris trade route, and had a detachment of Roman soldiers. The ruins of Peter's home are here, and Jesus lived with Peter

Owen (11:50):

And here's how that happened. It's a very interesting story because the first *two* disciples that Jesus recruited, Peter's younger brother, Andrew – *not* Peter – but Andrew, and Andrew's best friend, John – were the first *two* ever recruited. And they were already ... this is interesting ... already trying to grow Spiritually when they met Jesus. They were already disciples of John the Baptizer at that time. Now, the word *disciple* meant a "learner" or a "student," right? So, when

we say "disciples" of Jesus, we mean people *learning* under Him. If we say "disciples" of John the Baptizer, we're saying people *learning* under him. And by the way, if you look at the original Greek words in the Bible, his name was not John the "Baptist." There's no such word in the Greek. It was *John the Baptizer*. And that's what he did. And it's a long and fascinating story, and we don't have time for all that happened.

Owen (12:59):

But let's summarize it this way: Andrew and John were at the River Jordan at a place called Bethabara ("beth-AB'-uh-ruh"). And they were being taught there by John the Baptizer. By the way, that word means – there's your "Beth-" again – that means "House of the (river) Ford." And they were being taught by John the Baptizer, and they had heard him teaching that someone was to come called The Messiah. Of course, that was Jesus. He was going to come as The Messiah. And so one morning, while they were being taught, Jesus came through the crowd and walked by. And they saw Him. We don't know why, but they immediately stood up – obviously it was the power of the Spirit – but they immediately stood up, left John the Baptizer. Never looked back. And followed Jesus home.

Owen (13:58):

And they stayed there with Him 'til four in the afternoon, talking deeply and intently. And that's when they became his first *two* disciples. That day, in that place, at that time. What happened next? Andrew quickly ran to find his brother, Peter, got him off the fishing boat, and brought him back to meet Jesus too. And bingo! Peter became Jesus's *third* disciple. But let's pause a second. Because Jesus did something very strange when he recruited Peter. We've already mentioned it, but He *changed* Peter's name. And He changed it to a new name that had a hidden meaning in Aramaic. And we'll talk about why He did that. Because we know that his birth name was *Simon, the son of Jonah*. And for years, that had been his name as he worked as a fisherman. But when Jesus recruited Peter, Jesus gave him the new Aramaic name, *Cephus* ("SEE'-fuss").

Owen (15:09):

And one reason He did that is because it's easy to translate into Greek. And here's what ... let's read actually what the record of that event says. Let's read it now. Here we go:

"Then Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at Simon and said, 'You're Simon, son of Jonah. But from now on, you'll be called *Cephus* in Aramaic, which translates in Greek to *Peter*.'"

So, "Cephus" in Aramaic. "Peter" in Greek. *Why* did Jesus do that? *Why* did He change his name? Well, Jesus did that, and gave Peter an Aramaic name because, as I said, it has a double meaning, or a hidden meaning. And that's important. Because that double meaning was this: In Aramaic, *Cephus* can be translated to mean "a small stone or a rock." But it gets even better. Because *Cephus* can also be translated into Greek.

Owen (16:24):

Of course, Greek is the language in which the New Testament was written. And in that case, it translates "Peter." And – hold on – in Greek, "Peter" *also* means "a small stone or rock." Think about it. So *both* of Peter's new names, "Cephus" and "Peter," had the *same* meaning. They can be translated to mean a stone or a rock small enough that you can pick it up with your hand and throw it. Now, this is all weird. But why did Jesus give Simon bar Jona two names, and both of which can be translated a small stone or rock that you can pick up? He did it because He was prophesying an event that was going to happen soon in Peter's life. And when that event did happen – hang on – it was going to be the source of the big *misunderstanding* that many millions of Christians have about the apostle Peter.

Owen (17:33):

We're going to talk about that *misunderstanding* in a second. But first, we need to remember that the town of Capernaum that we're talking about then became Jesus's headquarters, while He was recruiting and training His staff of 12 disciples. So let's talk about how that happened. See, while Jesus was recruiting His disciples, He abandoned his home village of Nazareth. You may remember that. Because they had rejected Him. Actually His own family had rejected Him. So Jesus turned His back on Nazareth. Never went back. And He moved 20 miles east and settled in Capernaum. And He settled there, making *that* His new home, or His headquarters, for several months. Really, for the rest of His life until He ended it in Jerusalem. So think about that a second. And He didn't have a *house*. Remember that? Remember, He said one time that the foxes have holes in the ground, but He had nowhere to lay His head.

Owen (18:44):

So where did He go? What happened? Well, remember now, Andrew, Peter, James, John, Philip, Matthew, all had homes in Capernaum. And the other six disciples also lived there when they needed to be there. So this was the movement's headquarters, if you want to call it that. And what's interesting though, remember we said Capernaum means "town of comfort." And so we think about Jesus leaving His birthplace of Nazareth, leaving His family, leaving everybody He knew, and setting up headquarters in Capernaum, "the town of comfort." But we still haven't answered the question: "*Where did He live?*" Did Jesus live in a Day's Six hotel? Or a Holiday Inn? Or a Hampton Inn? No. The most amazing thing about it is in Capernaum that *the ruins of Peter's house are still there*. The ruins of Peter's house are still there where he lived with his wife, and his children, his younger brother, Andrew, his mother-in-law, and ... *Jesus*. Jesus lived there, too!

Owen (20:03):

And that ruin still exists today. You know, many Christians don't realize that *Jesus* lived in Peter's house in Capernaum, and that the remains of the house are still there. So I'm enclosing a picture here in the transcript of the ruins of Peter's house as it looks today. When you look at it, you'll see that it was large and comfortable. Had three courtyards. Several levels of rooms for cooking, and sleeping, and entertaining. And its size indicates that Peter was a leading citizen of Capernaum. And by the way, we *know* this was Peter's home. How? Because some of the walls were *plastered*. And some of that plaster remains. And there are ancient *inscriptions* on some of

those plaster walls that say that this was Peter's house. And then, of course, when the scientists excavated the ruins, they found many First Century lamps, pottery, jewelry – all kinds of artifacts they dug up – all of which dated to the First Century.



Ruins of Peter's home in Capernaum. It was large and comfortable, with three courtyards, showing that he was a leading citizen. Jesus lived here and performed miracles here

Owen (21:10):

So we know that was Peter's house. And remember, this is the very selfsame house that Jesus's first miracles were performed in. Remember? This is the house where Peter's mother-in-law was healed in one of the rooms. This is the house where they broke open the roof and lowered a man down on a stretcher, so that Jesus could heal him. This was a house where once all of the citizens of Capernaum surrounded the house begging for Jesus to heal them. So the ruins of Peter's house are very important in Christian history. But Capernaum is also important in Christian history for another reason. And that's the fact that Capernaum is where Jesus gave Christianity its *mission*. And it's also where Christianity's first *symbol* was born. We'll talk about those. And the fact that all five of Jesus's first disciples were professional fisher folk, fishermen, fisher people, whatever you want to call them.

Owen (22:33):

That helps explain the mission that Jesus gave Christianity. Because the first thing that Jesus said to these five disciples when he recruited them was this. And I quote:

"Follow Me, and I'll make you 'fishers' of men and women." (Repeats.)

So the mission Jesus gave us is to "go fishing." That's not a joke. And to "throw out the bait" and "catch" ... *who*? Non-Christians. Today, we call that "The Great Commission," or being "Evangelical." So but, the first symbol of Christianity then was what? *A fish*. And we still

see that on cars today. But what's more interesting is the "fish" represented in those days *non-Christians*. Not *Christians*. Non-Christians. Christians were catching the "fish" – non-Christians. More specifically, it represented the *souls* of non-Christians that needed to be "caught." I've got a photo here in the script showing a rock with the Early Christian "fish" symbol carved on it.



Some Original First Century Christian Symbols in a catacomb in Rome, including the first "Fish" symbol

Owen (23:48):

You'll find that interesting to look at. But more importantly, the Christian "fish" symbol appears in the catacombs of Rome from the First Century through the Third Century. But then, of course in the Fourth Century all of the original symbols start disappearing when the Roman emperor Constantine replaced them with the *institutional symbol* of the "crucifixion cross." But let's return to our story of Peter. You remember we started by saying that Peter was one of the most *misunderstood* of Jesus's original 12 disciples. So let's buckle down here and talk about that big misunderstanding. But the truth is that millions of Christians have been taught that Jesus "built" Christianity – "founded" Christianity – on the *physical* person of Peter. And that everything in Christianity is *based on*, and *revolves* around, the disciple Peter. But that misunderstanding is based on an incorrect reading of one verse – one verse – in the Bible, and that one verse is Matthew 16:18.

Owen (25:08):

Let me read it to you now. Jesus is speaking to Peter, and here's what he says. And I quote:

"And likewise, I say to you, that you are *Peter*, and on this "rock" I will build my church. And the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Now at a casual reading, without knowing the original Greek words in the verse, that does sound a little bit like Jesus is saying He's going to "build" Christianity on Peter. But we soon realize that's illogical because Christianity (chuckles) is built on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Not any *one* of the First Century disciples. And also notice though the verse sounds *strange* doesn't it? Why did Jesus say, "And likewise, I say to you." What did that mean? Apparently something came earlier? And what "rock" was Jesus referring to? That must have come earlier too. Why didn't Jesus simply say, "You're Peter, and I'm going to build my church on you"? But he didn't.

Owen (26:19):

He said, "likewise." And he talked about a "rock." So let's get to the answer quickly. The key is that Jesus was actually making a joke, or what English professors call a *wordplay*, on Peter's name. Remember, Peter was named "Peter" because the word *Peter* in Greek means a stone. And remember, a *small* stone. Small enough to pick up and throw. So Jesus was making a humorous comparison. He was comparing "Peter," a small stone, to a *big* "Rock." But where's the *big* "Rock"? What did the joke mean? Well to understand it all, we just simply need to look back at the preceding verse. That was Matthew 16:17. And in it, Jesus is complimenting Peter on something that Peter said. And here's what Jesus says to Peter. And I quote:

"Blessed are you, Peter, for *this was revealed to you* by My Father in heaven." (Repeats.)

Owen (27:25):

So watch out now. In these two verses (Matthew 16:17-18), Jesus is talking about being *guided* by the Father from heaven. That's the "Rock" He's talking about. And the Greek word there in the original verse for the word "Rock" means in Greek a *large Rocky Cliff*. Or a *huge Rocky Ledge*. So when we put all of these thoughts together, we can see the wordplay that Jesus is making. Here's what Jesus said to Peter, after telling him in verse 17 that the Father in heaven was guiding him, then Jesus continued, and said in verse 18:

"And likewise, I say to you that you're Peter, a 'stone' small enough to pick up and throw with my hand. But on the 'Rocky Cliff' – *on the direct guidance from the Father* – I'll build My Christianity. And the gates of Hades won't be able to overcome it."

Owen (28:34):

Wow. So as we said, those two verses are two of the most *misunderstood* verses in the Bible because they *don't* mean what many Christians have been told they mean. But look at this. The real meaning of those two verses is more powerful and more exciting than the illogical idea that Christianity was built on the body and person of Peter. Because the verses saying that *all* Christians – you and me – *all* Christians can and should have *direct Spiritual guidance* from the Father in heaven, and even Hades can't overcome that kind of Spiritual guidance.

Owen (29:20):

Well, let's pick up the story again of Peter's life. Let's jump ahead now, like we did a couple of times with Paul. And let's find out what happened to Peter in the end. Because after Christianity was founded in Jerusalem on May the 30th, in the year 30 AD, Peter continued to live quietly as an *elder* in Jerusalem for the next 25 years. And then after the age of about 55, he began to travel. He became an *apostle* now. He *had* been an elder.

Owen (29:58):

And he began to travel outside of Israel with his wife. And around 62 AD, he arrived in Rome. So let's fast forward to Rome and see what happened there. Because strangely, at this point in Peter's life, he becomes much like what happened in Paul's life. Peter had traveled to Rome to visit Paul in prison. But then he stayed on in Rome to teach in the Christian community there. We know, of course, from the previous episode, that Paul was released and left town. But Peter stayed there. And while Peter was living in Rome – this was the night of July the 18th, in 64 AD – a fire broke out in downtown Rome and quickly spread.

Owen (30:53):

And the Emperor Nero, of course, was on vacation. He was at the seashore. Had nothing to do with the fire. But the fire department couldn't put it out. And the fire burned six days and six nights. And it totally destroyed half a Rome, leaving 200,000 citizens homeless. Of course Nero returned from vacation and opened emergency shelters and distributed emergency food. But there wasn't much else he could do. And then Nero made a big mistake. For several years, he had been wanting to build a new palace. He was going to name it "The Golden House." And he had never started it. But a few weeks after this fire, he decided that he'd start building The Golden House on some of the city's *burned-out lots*. And he did that in fact, and finished it. But in the meantime, Nero had some political enemies who wanted to get him out of office. Those things happen today, don't they?

Owen (31:58):

And they spread the lie that he had started the fire *himself*, to make room for his new palace. And citywide protest marches broke out. And to protect himself, Nero started a *counter-lie*. He put spies out throughout the city, and he started the counter-lie that the *Christians* in Rome had started the fire, and by doggie, they should be punished for it. And so in October of 64 AD, Nero's counter-lie triggered the first great persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Thousands of innocent Christian men, women, and children, were rounded up and put to death in ways that are too horrible for us to even record here. Now remember, the apostle Paul had been released from prison and had left town, so he escaped all of this horror. And Peter, I guess logically, he wanted to escape it too. So he fled the city, and started walking south on the ancient highway that we call the Appian Way ("Ā'-pea-un") toward a Southern Seaport, where he knew he could get safe passage on a ship back to probably Jerusalem. Or maybe back to Capernaum. We don't know where he would have gone.

Owen (33:31):

And I'm including a picture here of the Appian Way in the transcript, where you can see here actually the cobblestones that Peter walked on in his effort to escape to the south. And did he escape? Sadly, no. And this is another one of history's mysteries. Because Jesus suddenly appeared to Peter in a vision beside one of the milestones on the Appian Way. You know, the Romans had a *milestone* every mile along the way with a number on it, so you could tell where you were – just like we do today on expressways. So Peter was by this milestone, when he had this vision. And he felt from this vision ... we don't know exactly what was said to him ... but he felt that it was God's will for him to return to the city and face his destiny.



The Appian Way leading from Rome to the southern seaports. Peter walked these very cobblestones while trying to escape from the Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians. A vision of Jesus stopped him at one of its milestones, and he turned around and returned to the city and to his head

Owen (34:31):

So he turned around and walked back to the city. And of course Nero's soldiers soon recognized him, arrested him, and put him in a death cell. And I'm including here in the script a picture of the milestone where Peter turned back. It's a place where pilgrims kneel and pray today and leave flowers. And I'm also including a picture of Peter's chains that the soldiers used to bind (him). Interestingly enough, the same display in a golden box in Rome has both the chains of Paul and Peter in one box. And then of course, I have a picture of the door to Peter's cell. And then a picture of the cell itself. Of course, it's ornamental today, with a prayer altar. But that's the dungeon where Peter was kept. And also where Paul was kept. But then, on October the 13th, in 64 AD ... Peter was 61 years of age ... Nero's soldiers crucified him upside down near the giant obelisk that stood in the middle of Rome's chariot racetrack at that time.



The remains of the milestone on the Appian Way where Peter had a vision and turned back to the city. He was soon arrested and put to death



The chains that bound Peter in 64 AD. This same display in Rome also contains the chains that bound Paul three years later, in 67 AD



The ancient door in Peter's death cell in Rome. Three years later, Paul was kept in this same cell before he was marched out of town and beheaded beside the road



Peter's death cell in Rome. The plaque on the wall at the upper left says in Italian that this cell held both Peter and Paul in the First Century. It held Peter in 64 AD. And it held Paul in 67 AD. Note block in center where they were chained

Owen (35:49):

And you know, that same giant obelisk still stands in St. Peter's Square in Rome today. And if you watch on American TV some of the films of the Pope doing things, you'll often see that huge, tall obelisk in the background of the films and the photographs. So that's very interesting.

Well, as it happened, there was a public cemetery near the site of Peter's execution, right close to that obelisk in the middle of that racetrack. And this cemetery then was on the slopes of a hill next to the racetrack called "Vatican Hill." And the soldiers cut Peter's body down from the upside down position. And they took him just a few yards, and they buried him in a shallow, unmarked grave in that public cemetery. And over the years, Christians gradually improved Peter's grave, and made it a pilgrimage site.



The obelisk ("OB'-uh-lisk") in St. Peter's Square today. Peter was crucified upside-down beside it on October 13, 64 AD

Owen (37:03):

But they never, ever put his name on the grave. They were afraid that something would happen if the Romans found out who was buried there. And so for centuries, it was a secret. His burial spot was a secret to everyone but special Christians in the city who knew the secret. But here's our question today. *Where* is Peter now? *Where* is Peter today? And the answer is: His body is still right where it was in 64 AD. It's still in that unmarked grave on Vatican Hill. However, here's the trick. In the Fourth Century, the Roman emperor Constantine did the same thing to Peter's grave that he would also do to Paul's grave. Remember, we said that under Roman law it was illegal to disturb a grave or move a body. So Constantine simply *bought* the graveyard – the one on Vatican Hill – and he built an altar over Peter's grave. And then he built a huge basilica, a large "church" building, over that altar.

Owen (38:15):

And today, the basilica that Constantine built is known as St. Peter's Basilica in St. Peter's Square in Rome, in the area now known as – guess what? – "Vatican City." And although tourists don't realize it, Peter's bones, which have been scientifically identified, still lie in his small mausoleum 30 feet beneath the floor of St. Peter's. And they can be seen by special appointment. There's a small prayer altar ... chapel ... beside his little grave today where the Popes privately pray. And I've visited Peter's grave. And I'm including a picture of the Pope's prayer chapel right

here in the script. But as we approach the end of this episode, how in the world do we *summarize* Peter's life? What can we say in *summary* about such an incredible person? We know he was highly Spiritual. We know he lived with his family as an elder in Jerusalem. We know he went on the road as an apostle.



Peter's grave 30 feet beneath the floor of St. Peter's basilica in St. Peter's Square in Rome, with the Pope's prayer chapel beside it

Owen (39:35):

We know he ended up teaching in Rome. We know that Peter wrote the beautiful letters of First and Second Peter in the Bible. You know what? Some researchers even think that he dictated the gospel of *Mark* to young John-Mark, whose name is on that book in the Bible today. But I think there's a whole deeper lesson to Peter's life. Remember, we've been saying that he's one of the most misunderstood of the 12 original disciples. And that's true. But he's also one of the most *important* of the original 12 disciples. And here's why, and it's tied to the misunderstanding. Here's why: He's the disciple that Jesus used to demonstrate how *Christianity* is supposed to work. Think about that. That happened when Jesus did the wordplay on Peter's name. Remember, He called Peter a "small stone." But He said He was *building* Christianity on a "huge Rock."

Owen (40:45):

And that "huge Rock" was direct communication with the Father in heaven. So here's the Spiritual law that Jesus established with his wordplay on "Peter." And here it is:

Christianity is supposed to work on the Spiritual law that every Christian can – and every Christian should – receive *daily strength and guidance directly from the Father in heaven*, without going through any other human or any other human organization.

So my prayer for *all* of us here on our podcast team, and my prayer for *all* of you out there in Podcast Land ... wherever you are, whatever you're doing ... is that *all* of us together will obey that Spiritual law, the one Jesus taught us using Peter as an example. And that all of us – each and every one of us – will have *more* daily strength and guidance directly from the Father in heaven. And to the extent that we do, we will have the same peace, hope, and purpose, that the Early Christians had – and we'll have it all the days of our lives.

Owen (42:12):

And I can see now by the big clock on the wall that it's time to say goodbye for now. But in the meantime, remember this is Episode 21, and a script and recording of it are on our website at: www.goSCpod.com. I hope you'll visit the website and open this episode, and look at the pictures of the apostle Peter's life and death.

Owen (42:40):

But for now ... I'm "sorry" to (have to) say ... this is Owen Allen, speaking for myself and our intrepid producer, Shannon Wolfe ...

Owen (42:50):

... saying: May the God of our fathers bless you, and keep you, and guide you, and protect you, until we meet again.

Owen (43:15):

Owen ends the episode.