



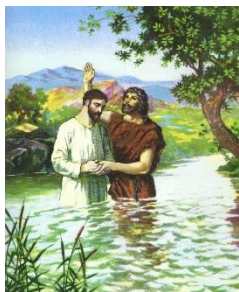
Good morning to you. My name is Simon and I am a fisherman. I am a Jew and the main language I speak is Aramaic. I grew up in this village of Bethsaida by the Sea of Galilee. We Jews are in the minority in Bethsaida as it is a mainly Gentile population so I am also familiar with the Greek language, which is usually spoken here. Along with my brother Andrew, I have helped my father,

John, on the family fishing boat since I was a young lad. There was no time for formal schooling since we were out in the boat most days of the week. As was the custom, I was taken to the local synagogue every Saturday by my father and had to learn large chunks of the Scriptures off by heart. Not my favourite pastime though as I would much rather have been out in the boat!

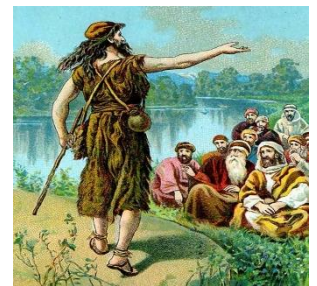


I am very close to my brother Andrew with working with him every day. He lives with me and my wife quite near to the shore, which is handy for work; the mother-in-law also lives with us.

About 60 miles away there has recently been a bloke named John who has been



preaching, encouraging people to get their lives right with God and then baptising them. He has also been talking about a man named Jesus and saying that he is the Son of God. Apparently one day this Jesus was baptised by John and John saw the Holy Spirit come upon him, as a dove. He said



that he himself was baptising people in water but that Jesus would be baptising with the Holy Spirit. Andrew has been to Bethany a number of times to hear what John is

preaching about and has become one of his close followers. When he was telling me about Jesus getting baptised we did not understand what John meant when he had said that Jesus would baptise in the Holy Spirit.

One day Andrew decided to go and listen to Jesus. Jesus invited him to go with him to where he was staying and Andrew spent the day with him. He came back home and told me all about the visit. He was really impressed and told me that he had found the Messiah. Well, we Jews have been expecting a Messiah

Messiah

for some years, but I suppose we were really thinking about someone who would be a good fighter and who would come with his army and defeat these Romans who rule over us. Certainly we have not envisaged one man on his own and most definitely not someone from Nazareth just down the road!

I decided to go and meet this Jesus myself as I was so intrigued by what Andrew had told me about him. When I came face to face with the man in question he looked at me and said, "So you are Simeon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas." (Aramaic = stone= loose and moveable) It was only some time later that Jesus said more about this and it became clear what he meant. Meanwhile, both Andrew and I started to spend more and more time with him. We listened to his preaching and knew in our hearts that this really was someone who was very special and not an ordinary run-of-the-mill itinerant preacher.

Another thing that amazed us about Jesus was the way he prayed for people who were ill and they were instantly healed. With our own eyes we saw lame people starting to walk okay and those who were

blind having their sight restored – Now, how brilliant is that! People who had been born dumb were able to speak and those who were under the power of the devil were released from their miserable lives.



One day Andrew and I were in the boat quite near to the shore and we were letting the nets down over the side of the boat when Jesus walked past along the shore. He called out to us, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” What a strange thing to say. We knew about fishing for fish but did not know what he was on about when he talked about fishing for men! We pulled in the nets and made it back to shore because we knew that Jesus had something in mind for us to do. We also felt that we were compelled to follow this man, even though we did not quite know what lay ahead for us.

Although we continued to spend some of our time in the boat fishing in order to provide for ourselves and our families, from now on our main focus was to be with Jesus, to learn from him and about him and to be part of the plan to tell others about the Kingdom of Heaven and to see people healed and restored to full health.

Jesus the Christ

Jesus the Son of the Living God

Jesus the Rock

Back to my new name. One day when a group of us were with Jesus, he asked us what people were saying about who he was. A number of different replies were given to his question then I said to him, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus said that it was God who had revealed this to me and that the Church would be built on that confession of Jesus as the Son of the Living God. I am so glad that Jesus is a solid, solid, immovable rock and not a loose moveable stone. He never changes, is always there and is our passport to Heaven. I am now often known as Peter (Greek = stone) or Simon Peter, and yes, even though I still go out fishing in the boat, my life is dedicated to being a ‘Fisher of men’ as Jesus intended. Fishing for fish is a means of earning a living and providing for my family, but, fishing for men has eternal consequences and I am pleased to be used by God to catch fish for Him.

