

Portraits of Christ: Walking With God

I. Taking His Time

1. The whole of what is contained in the gospels could have unfolded over a matter of months, but instead Jesus' ministry lasts for three years. Why? Because real hearts are encountering and responding to the revelation of God in Jesus and that takes time.
2. The way God chose to reveal Himself to those following Him in His time on the earth is not all that different from the way He reveals Himself to those following Him now.
3. They met Jesus as a Man who invited them to follow and see what He was about and hear what He had to say.
4. Jesus would show them a bit of revelation, and then let them process for awhile. Just as they were finally absorbing it, He would show them something new and send them scrambling again.
5. Besides having more major revelations about God in a shorter period of time than anyone in the Old Testament, those following Jesus experienced something no one had since Adam – everyday was spent walking with God – their eyes on Him and His eyes on them.
6. They received their revelation in the context of relationship – which meant everything they learned was not a fact to be filed, but an immediately relevant truth that shaped their lives together with Jesus.
7. From their example, we get a picture of what it's like to walk with God.

II. Peter's Journey of Faith

1. Jesus is introduced to Peter as the Christ. Jesus then introduces Peter to himself as “the rock.” *John 1:41* He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).
2. That is only the beginning, though, of Peter's journey in discovering the revelation of who Jesus is, and of who he is in Jesus. His walk with Jesus is a series of events over time. What is going on in Peter's mind between the things He sees?
3. He follows Jesus as Jesus heals and delivers the multitudes... and gets sent out with a commissioning to do the same. *Matthew 9:35* Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people... *10:1* And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease... 5 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying... 7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

4. He sees Jesus walk on the water... and joins Him. His faith reaches its limit there in the middle of the sea, but at this point the disciples are getting fairly convinced as to who Jesus is.
Matthew 14:25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea... 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."
5. Then comes the great question, and Peter's faith-filled response. Peter notes that now he has come to know that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus notes it as revelation from the Father, and again reaffirms Peter's identity as "the rock."
John 6:68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
Matthew 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."
6. Jesus, upon Peter's revelation immediately begins to show him something new... and it throws Peter for a loop.
Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. 22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."
7. Then before Peter even has a chance to recover, Jesus shows him yet another side of His glory.
Matthew 17:1 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.
8. Some time later, then, Peter walks with Jesus as He rides into Jerusalem hailed as king.
Matthew 21:8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" 10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?"

9. Is it any wonder then, that Peter is totally confused when Jesus begins washing his feet?
John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." 8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." 9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

10. Peter then gets to experience the revelation of the cross, not as a doctrine of justification, but in an intensely personal way – watching the One he loves bleed and die right after Peter refused his own cross and denied Him.
Luke 22:60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

11. All of which would have been a bit overwhelming for a fisherman from Galilee. In his efforts to process, Peter finally goes back to what he knows. Jesus shows up at his hour of need and reminds him of what really matters.
John 21:3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."... 4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus...7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea...15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

12. After forty days of processing with Jesus, and then just a moment of processing the sudden appearance of the Holy Spirit we find Peter standing full of faith proclaiming to Jerusalem that they have just crucified the Son of God.
Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

III. Mary's Journey of Love

1. With Mary, there are only three encounters with Jesus that we know of (with hints that they may have been more frequent, less notable ones).

2. We find her sitting at Jesus' feet when He visits her house in the middle of His years of ministry.
Luke 10:38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

3. From the time of that encounter, something happens in her heart that gives her the boldness to call for Jesus as her brother is dying.
John 11:1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."
4. We find her again at Jesus' feet after He comes in response to her call when Lazarus dies.
John 11:28 ...[Martha] secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." 29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him... 32 Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept.
5. And in her most well known appearance, we find her pouring out her inheritance on Jesus' feet in response to what is now in her heart from this second encounter.
John 12:3 Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. 4 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ... 7 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."
6. Jesus says "remember Mary" in the telling of the gospel – she is a picture of how to steward the gospel – how to really hear it, and respond in faith.
Matthew 26:13 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.

IV. Walking with God

1. God chose for revelation to be a process that unfolds in real space and time in walking with Him.
2. Where the Old Covenant was revealed as a single great shift in man's understanding of God in a one-time encounter with God's glory and then passed down written in stone. The new consists of an ongoing encounter that transforms from glory to glory as His law is written on our hearts.
2 Corinthians 3:7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? ... 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a 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.
3. There is no Ten Commandments, no checklist for fulfilling the New Covenant, but rather there is Jesus and the call to believe in Him – to hear Him and respond to what He has to say.
John 6:28 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

4. Jesus is no ordinary prophet with a word from God, and a sign to confirm its authenticity. He is the sign, and He is the Word.
John 6:30 Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." 35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.
5. New Covenant Christianity is about an ongoing encounter with a living God. We hear Him, and then we respond to what we hear.
Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"
Luke 8:16 "No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. 17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. 18 Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."
6. We say that often, but what we usually think of is when He specifically addresses us and tells us to go and do something. Jesus did that on occasion, but He was also continually speaking (in word and in deed) about who He was and what was on His heart. As His followers heard and responded to that, it changed them, and they learned to hear His voice.
Romans 12:2 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 and perfect will of God.
7. With the availability of lots of teaching and summaries of doctrine, and even just the prepared gospels that we can read in a matter of few hours, we can easily come to know a lot about Jesus without really knowing anything, and without really responding.
8. It's the journey of living with our eyes on God, and living before His eyes, that really begins to touch us and transform us with the revelation of Christ.
9. What if we encountered Jesus in the way the disciples did? What if we set ourselves on a journey to really know Him through a process of unfolding revelation over the course of years? What if we approached Him as a Man who had called us to follow Him and who wanted to be known? What if we treated every revelation as new and not truly "known" until we had felt it and considered it and let it change us and our relationship with Him?