

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

11-19-25

John 21

Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish – Verses 1-3

¹ Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

21:1 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples: John recorded another of the several appearances of the resurrected Jesus to His disciples. This appearance took place in the Galilee region (at the Sea of Tiberias). Matthew 28:16 also records an appearance of the resurrected Jesus to His disciples in Galilee.

20:2 And two others of His disciples: “There were ‘two other,’ and they are unnamed, and I believe purposely unnamed. They represent the anonymous and hidden multitudes of faithful souls, whose names are never published in human documents, whose deeds are never reported in human reports. To these He manifested Himself as surely as to the others. Those ‘two other’ represented the majority of the saints.”

Jesus Directs Their Work – Verses 4-6

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. ⁶ He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

20:4 Jesus stood on the shore: It’s wonderful to think that Jesus showed up at their work. He was interested in all their life, not just when they attended religious service. “The risen Redeemer and Ruler was showing men His interest and power in the commonplaces of their lives.”

20:6 Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some: Jesus made a strange suggestion to His disciples. There was no logical reason why fishing in the morning light would be better than fishing at night. There was no reason why fishing on one side of the boat would be better than the other side. It wasn’t even directly a test of trust in Jesus, because they did not know it was Him until the fish were caught. This was probably a test of their ability to find the guidance of God in small and unsuspected ways — such as a stranger calling out fishing instructions from the shore. This account illustrates the principle that we should never be afraid to change our method, as long as it is at the direction of Jesus.

The Disciples Recognize Jesus On The Shore – Verses 7-8

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

21:7 It is the Lord: John reached the tomb before Peter (John 20:4) and recognized the fact of Jesus' resurrection before Peter (John 20:8). Here John also recognized the identity of the stranger on the shore before Peter did. John knew that anything this wonderful had to come from Jesus.

21:7 Plunged into the sea: John was first in recognition, but Peter would be first in devotion. He threw on his outer garment and threw himself into the water to reach Jesus as soon as possible. The boat couldn't move quickly enough for Peter, and he didn't want John to be first again. Perhaps — perhaps — Peter thought he might walk on the water to the shore.

Jesus Invites The Disciples To Breakfast – Verses 9-14

⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” ¹¹So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

21:9 They saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread: When the disciples came to shore — including a wet Peter — they noticed that the resurrected Jesus was still a humble servant. He took the trouble to prepare a fire and cook the food for His disciples. Bring some of the fish which you have just caught: The order of events shows that Jesus had food for them before the great catch of fish were brought in. What they caught added to the menu; it did not make it.

20:11 Full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three: Peter took the initiative and dragged the heavy net all by himself. The net was not broken and held a large catch of 153 fish. Through the centuries there have been many attempts to explain why the number was 153. Some interpreters (like Augustine) thought that because 153 is the sum of numbers 1 to 17, this catch of fish points towards the number 17 — which he thought to be the number of commandments (10) added to the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit. The truth is that all we know for certain is that 153 represents the number of fish in the net. The many allegorical interpretations of the number warn us against creating hidden meanings in the Biblical text.

Jesus Reinstates Peter – Verses 15-19

¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

21:15-17 In this beach scene, Jesus led Peter through an experience that would remove the cloud of his denial. Peter had disowned Jesus three times. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. When Peter answered yes, Jesus told him to feed his sheep. It is one thing to say you love Jesus, but the real test is willingness to serve him. Peter had repented, and here Jesus was asking him to

commit his life. Peter's life changed when he finally realized who Jesus was. His occupation changed from fisherman to evangelist; his identity changed from impetuous to "rock"; and his relationship to Jesus changed—he was forgiven, and he finally understood the significance of Jesus' words about his death and resurrection.

21:15-17 Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. The first time Jesus said, "Do you love (Greek agape: volitional, self-sacrificial love) me more than these?" The second time, Jesus focused on Peter alone and still used the word translated into Greek, agape. The third time, Jesus used the word translated into Greek, phileo (signifying affection, affinity, or brotherly love) and asked, in effect, "Are you even my friend?" Each time Peter responded with the word translated into Greek as phileo. Jesus doesn't settle for quick, superficial answers. He has a way of getting to the heart of the matter. Peter had to face his true feelings and motives when Jesus confronted him. How would you respond if Jesus asked you, "Do you love me? Do you really love me? Are you even my friend?"

21:18-19 This was a prediction of Peter's death by crucifixion. Tradition indicates that Peter was crucified for his faith— upside down because he did not feel worthy of dying as his Lord did. Despite what Peter's future held, Jesus told him to follow him. We may be uncertain and fearful about our future. But if we know God is in control, we can confidently follow Christ.

What about John? – Verses 20-23

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" ²² Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." ²³ Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

21:21-22 But Lord, what about this man: Jesus just renewed His challenge to Peter, follow Me (John 21:19). Peter's first response was not to tell Jesus yes, but turning around he looked at the other disciple, John. Peter first response to the personal challenge from Jesus was to deflect it by wondering what Jesus wanted to do regarding someone else. Peter represents most all of us. We find it easy to deflect any personal challenge from Jesus by wondering and even worrying about what other disciples are doing or what Jesus may require from them.

21:23 Early church history reports that after John spent several years as an exile on the island of Patmos, he returned to Ephesus where he died as an old man, near the end of the first century.

The Conclusion To The Gospel Of John – Verses 24-25

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

21:23-25 John's stated purpose for writing his Gospel was to show that Jesus was the Son of God (20:31). He clearly and systematically presented the evidence for Jesus' claims. When evidence is presented in the courtroom, those who hear it must make a choice. Those who read the Gospel of John must also make a choice— is Jesus the Son of God, or isn't he? You are the jury. The evidence has been clearly presented. You must decide. Read John's Gospel and believe!