

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SESSION 23

Review: The last time we went through chapter 20 which records the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His appearance first to Mary Magdalene, then to the disciples minus Thomas. Eight days later, Thomas is with them and Jesus appears again to them. Thomas is made a believer in the resurrected Christ. The chapter closes with John stating the explicit purpose of his entire gospel account: **John 20:31** But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

John 21:1-4 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. *After his resurrection, Jesus would appear at times to his disciples (not walk with them like before). This chapter is the account of the third time that he appeared to them. The sea of Tiberias is the sea of Galilee. Tiberias is the Roman name for it.*

Why Peter went back to fishing – Peter went back to fishing because he thought he had aborted the call of Christ on his life. While modern readers often assume that Peter began using profanity or foul language, the historical and linguistic context reveals that he was invoking severe divine judgment upon himself to convince the crowd he was telling the truth.

The Cultural Context of "Cursing and Swearing"

In the accounts found in Matthew 26:74 and Mark 14:71, the text states that Peter "began to curse and swear".

- **Swearing (*Omnymy*):** This means to take a formal, binding legal oath. Peter was essentially saying, *"I swear before God as my witness that I do not know this man!"*
- **Cursing (*Anathematizo*):** In Greek, this refers to calling down an *anathema*—meaning something devoted to destruction. By doing this, Peter was invoking a self-curse, declaring: *"May God strike me dead or curse me to eternal destruction if I am lying to you right now."*

Peter intensified his denial by placing himself under an oath and invoking judgment upon himself if his words were false.

John 21:5-9 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. *The first time Peter(then Simon) was called to ministry was after a failed night of fishing. During the day, the Lord instructed Simon to launch out into the deep and let down his nets for a draught. He reluctantly let down one net and so many fish were enclosed in it that it broke. James and John were there too and Jesus told them all that from then on, they would catch men. Luke 5:1-10 This occurrence is almost an exact repeat of that time. There's a reason for that. They recognize that the man on the shore was the Lord because of net full of fish. They are about 100 yards from shore. When they get to land there is a meal fixed for them because they were no doubt hungry.*

John 21:10-14 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. *The first time Jesus told Simon to let down the "nets" he only let down one because he had no faith. The net broke because Jesus knew that one net wasn't enough to bring them all in. This time the net didn't break because they immediately did what they were told in faith.*

- **Why record that there were 153 great fish in the net?** Early church fathers point out that at that time, Greek zoologists of the Roman era believed there were exactly 153 unique species of fish in the world's oceans. By recording that they caught one of every kind of fish, the Holy Spirit maybe implying that the Great Commission is universal. The disciples as the "fishers of men" were being sent to gather all nations, tribes, languages, and cultures into the Kingdom of God, leaving no group behind.

John 21:15-17 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love

thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. **How the Curse Was Broken:** *Because Peter lied under a self-imposed oath, he bound himself to his own curse. In ancient Jewish tradition, a self-curse of this magnitude could only be formally undone or forgiven by the party who was wronged. This is what makes the post-resurrection narrative so powerful. Here, Jesus meets Peter by the Sea of Galilee and asks him three distinct times, "Do you love me?" This direct, three-fold reinstatement perfectly mirrors Peter's three-fold denial, systematically lifting the weight of the curse and restoring Peter to his calling.*

John 21:18-19 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. *Now that Peter is restored to his calling, Jesus gives him a personal and sober prophecy concerning his death. He contrasts two eras of Peter's life "When you were young, you did as you pleased. When you shall be old, you will display total submission of control." To a first-century reader in the Roman Empire, the phrase "stretch out your hands" was a well-known euphemism for crucifixion. It referred specifically to the process of a prisoner being forced to stretch out their arms to be fastened to the crossbeam before being marched through the streets to the execution site. John recorded that his death would glorify God. Then Jesus said to him what he said in Luke 5 at his original calling, "Follow me".*

Historical Fulfillment: Church history and early Christian tradition heavily confirm that this prophecy was fulfilled with chilling precision. Around 64–67 AD, during the brutal persecutions of the Roman Emperor Nero, Peter was arrested in Rome. According to early church historians like Eusebius and Tertullian, Peter was sentenced to crucifixion. Feeling entirely unworthy to die in the exact same manner as his Lord, Peter famously requested to be crucified upside down, stretching his hands out toward the earth rather than heaven.

John 21:20-25 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him,

He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. *Peter was probably startled by what Jesus had just said to him so he turns around, spots John and says "Lord, what shall this man do?" The Lord responded with "That's none of your business" (I'm paraphrasing) Following Christ is personal and we shouldn't be concerned with comparing what he has for us to do with what he has for others. The disciples misunderstood what Jesus said concerning John and they spread it among the other believers that Christ said that John wouldn't die. He didn't say that he was simply saying to Peter "if that is my will for him, you have nothing in that". John concludes his amazing gospel by telling us that if everything was recorded that Jesus did, the world couldn't contain the books! That is remarkable*

Tonight's application: THE EMPTY NET...Because Peter believed he had disqualified himself from his calling, he went back to the only other thing he knew. Every time the net went down; it came up empty. The first time he was called to ministry was after a night of empty nets. What this teaches us is that when Christ wants to take us deeper in our relationship with him or he is calling us to his purpose, the things we used to find meaning or purpose in starts coming up empty. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved him "more than these" he is referring to the great fish in the net, not the other disciples. A net full of great fish is a great pay-day. When Peter said yes, the Lord immediately revealed his will (feed my sheep) or in other words "walk away from fishing"