

Episode #2-31 - John's Postscript: Untangling Peter

I. The purpose of the gospel of John is to produce believers in the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the One anointed by God to be the Savior of the world, and that Jesus is the Son of God, God represented in human form.

II. The book of John is completed in chapter 20:30-31. John states his premise, and its conclusion. If the book has achieved its purpose, its reader now believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and has life through His name. Why is there a chapter 21? To answer the new believer's question: what now? And to answer it through the example of Peter.

III. Peter before the cross.

A. Peter became a disciple early (John 1:40-41,) and quickly moved up to become one of the twelve (Matthew 10:1,) and received the greatest revelations (Matthew 17:1-9.)

B. Peter, like the other disciples, must have been very proud of his position. He had great ambition for his position in the kingdom! Matthew 18:1, Luke 22:24.

III. Peter's denials.

A. Peter could not believe that he would ever deny the Lord. Matthew 26:34-35.

B. When the Lord allowed Himself to be arrested, Peter's view of the Lord was shaken. Why would the Lord allow such a thing, rather than conquering?

C. When Peter denied the Lord, his view of himself was destroyed.

D. When the Lord died, it seemed everything he had hoped for was destroyed.

IV. Peter after the resurrection.

A. The resurrection restored Peter's view of the Lord. He was even greater than Peter had imagined! However, it did not restore his view of himself.

B. Surely, Peter must have now seen himself as a silly fisherman who had reached for things far too high for him. He is surely not qualified to rule in the Lord's great kingdom. He had better go back to the only thing he is good at: fishing.

V. John 21:1-14. The Lord's third appearance to His disciples.

A. V.1. The setting: the Sea of Tiberias (or Sea of Galilee.)

B. V.2. These seven disciples were together. Again, John does not refer to himself directly. It is clear now things were not going to be as before the Lord's death. What would become of them, His disciples, now?

C. V.3. Peter decides to go back to fishing, the only thing he thinks he is good at now. Sadly, he cannot seem to even do that anymore: they catch nothing!

D. V.4. The Lord appears to them, probably where they were planning to land. They do not recognize Him, probably due to distance from the shore. (Luke 24:16)

E. V.5. The Lord knows they do not, but is setting up the miracle He wants to perform. Perhaps they thought this was Zebedee?

F. V.6. This does not mean they had only cast on the left side all night: this was a command to follow, and by following it they would show faith and obedience.

1. This is the final (8th) sign in John. It corresponds to the 1st, changing the water to wine (John 2,) showing the Lord's power over nature as the Son of God.

2. Both the first and last sign involved a command ("Fill" there, "Cast" here.)

3. The first sign was a prologue to His ministry (John 2:4), this a postscript.

G. V.7. Compare to Luke 5:1-11. John (still writing like he is talking about someone else) realizes this must be the Lord Jesus. Peter is still eager to be with the Lord, even if he does not believe himself worthy of Him anymore.

H. V.8. They could not lift the net, so could only drag it. This was quite a catch indeed!

I. V.9. The Lord had been waiting for them, preparing breakfast. He was preparing fish, which shows He was not a vegetarian! God instituted the eating of meat (Gen. 9:3,) but only after the flood damaged the earth through man's sin (Gen. 1:29-30). It is wrong to take God's plan for a prior time and try to use it today. Numbers 14:39-45.

J. V.10. The Lord only has one small fish and loaf, but in the boat are enough fishes so only a few of them will easily feed these men. A different miracle from feeding the 5,000, but a similar result: all are fed!

K. V.11. Peter is still eager to obey the Lord's commands, in spite of his failure earlier. But the question is: will the Lord allow him to continue to serve Him? 153 fish! With this man, we can see that the net not breaking was also a miracle.

L. V.12. They are eating with the Lord, just as they had done for three years. This time is much the same, and yet, much different! They must be almost afraid of Him now.

M. V.13. The Lord has not changed. He is still willing to serve His disciples!

N. V.14. This was His third appearance to the majority of His disciples, not including His appearances to the women, or to Peter alone (I Cor. 15:5, Luke 24:34).

IV. Conclusion: John's theme is complete, asking the reader to believe. Why then does this postscript exist? There is still the matter of Peter to settle. His belief in the Lord was justified by His resurrection, but his belief in himself is still in shambles. He wants to serve the Lord, but he does not know how, and does not think he deserves to. Yet the Lord still wants to be with Peter. Praise God that He still loves us, even when we let Him down. How great is His grace!