

JESUS' APPEARANCE AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS

BIBLE TEXT : John 21:1-25

LESSON 251 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

John 21:1-25

¹ After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

⁵ Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Third Appearance of Jesus to the Apostles

² Peter and six others go fishing without success in the Sea of Tiberias, John 21:1-3

³ Jesus appears on the shore, John 21:4, 5

⁴ Following His command, the disciples make a miraculous catch of fish, John 21:6-11;

Luke 5:4-11

⁴ Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

⁵ And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

⁶ And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

⁷ And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

⁹ For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

¹⁰ And so *was* also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

¹¹ And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

⁵ "Come and dine," John 21:12-14;

Luke 1:53

⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

Psalms 34:10

¹⁰ The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

II The Examination of Peter

¹ "Lovest thou me more than these?" John 21:15-17;

Luke 14:26-27

²⁶ If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

²⁷ And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:33

³³ So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 19:28-34

²⁸ And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

²⁹ And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the* mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

³⁰ Saying, Go ye into the village over against *you*; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him* *hither*.

³¹ And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose *him*? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

³² And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

¹⁰ Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

¹³ Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

¹⁴ This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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

³³ And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

³⁴ And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

Philippians 3:8

⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

2 Peter's martyrdom is foretold, John 21:18, 19;

1 Peter 2:21

²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

3 Peter is rebuked for his question, "What shall this man do?" John 21:20-23

4 John certifies the truthfulness of all his testimony about Jesus; John 21:24, 25;

Luke 1:2

² Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

Luke 24:48

⁴⁸ And ye are witnesses of these things.

Acts 1:21-22

²¹ Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

²² Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

2 Peter 1:16

¹⁶ For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

NOTES:

The First of Two Miraculous Catches of Fish

It is early in Jesus' ministry, about three and a half years before the incidents mentioned in today's lesson. An excited crowd is stirring around the water's edge. A fishing boat is moving slowly off shore. It anchors. The tumult is silenced by a voice from the deck of the ship, and the people on the beach listen as the Savior teaches them the Word of God. At the close of the discourse Jesus turns to Simon Peter, the owner of the craft, and says, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing," the fisherman remonstrates, "nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:4, 5). Upon obeying the Lord's command Peter receives the greatest thrill of his fishing career. With his net breaking from the multitude of fish, he signals for James and John to pull up alongside. They fill both ships until they begin to sink — and still there are fish. No doubt Peter has had many strange experiences in his fishing days, but nothing to equal this.

The Call of Peter

This miracle put in the heart of Peter great confidence in the Master, and prepared Peter for the call, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Peter followed. It meant something for Peter and the other Apostles to leave all and follow Jesus. Think of these fishermen who probably knew no other livelihood but to fish. To leave those boats, and all the gear equipped for their work; to leave the familiar spots, the beautiful lake that meant pleasure and sustenance; to leave home and family — were no small things. These men stepped out into a life of faith. But that call, "Follow me," was not an

thee whither thou wouldst not.

¹⁹ This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

²⁰ 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?

²¹ Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*?

²² Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me.

²³ 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?

²⁴ This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ 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.

earthly call; it came from the Son of God. No worldly promise accompanied it, save "I will make you fishers of men." The fishermen followed. A change too miraculous to explain took place in the hearts of these men. Jesus said this change was like the wind that "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Today the same new birth is still given to those who repent and turn from their sins to follow the Savior.

A Walk of Faith

Peter received a great deal of experience and learned much from the Master in those three and a half years that he followed Jesus. At one time he and the other Apostles were sent out, two by two, to preach the Gospel.

They were instructed not to take an extra coat nor any money in their purse, that they might learn to live by faith. Later on, Jesus questioned them about this trip: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?" (Luke 22:35). "Nothing," was the answer. This was before the crucifixion. The death of the Savior seemed to darken the hopes of the disciples, and especially was Peter affected. They seemed like children thrust suddenly from adolescence to adulthood. They were not quite ready to have their Master leave. It is true that the resurrection brought back a certain amount of joy and hope to them, but still they were somewhat bewildered. Jesus had appeared twice to them as they were assembled, but when He left they did not quite know what to do with themselves. They had walked by faith, but with the assurance that their Master was always near.

A Fishing Trip

In their uncertainty Peter said, "I go a fishing." Six others answered, "We also go with thee" (John 21:3). For Peter and his partners, it meant going back to the old trade. To be back at the old trade again no doubt gave them a little more feeling of material security. All night long they threw out their nets, pulling them in time after time. But they caught no fish. Daylight approached, and they headed back toward the shore. On the beach a lone Figure stood silhouetted against the sands. His voice rang out across the water, "Children, have ye any meat?" "No." "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." With this encouragement and the hope of a fisherman in one more cast, they obeyed. They struggled with the net, but were unable to draw it up because of the multitude of fish.

"It is the Lord," said John to Peter. Without waiting to see how they would get the fish to shore, Peter jumped into the water and headed toward Jesus. No doubt Peter's mind went back to that time he had heard the Master's call, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." All the Apostles were in danger of losing sight of the call that Jesus had given them and of going back to their former occupation.

Many today have left their faith and reliance in Jesus and have gone back to the old life — toiling night and day — but catching nothing. With their nets empty and their souls starved they continue; to think that another cast will bring success. Come back, backslider, to the place where your heart loved to pray. The Savior is waiting to renew the call, "Follow me." Hear Him answer the repenting heart, "Thy sins are forgiven ... go in peace."

The Master's Table

The disciples found that upon the coals of fire was fish already cooked. The Master of the sea need not depend upon the fishermen for fish. All things were created by Him and for Him, and He invites all to "come and dine." His table is spread with good things. His ways are above our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Can you trust Him, Peter?

A Choice

Jesus said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15). On the shore lay 153 beautiful fishes, beside them the net; partially beached nearby was the fishing boat, a delight to any fisherman's heart, and a big part in the livelihood of these men. "Lovest thou me more than these?" With a glance at the fishes and at his Master, Peter replied, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Deeper probed the Spirit of God into Simon's heart, as Jesus asked the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Perhaps with consecrations never again to fail the Lord, Peter replied, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." The next challenge was "Feed my sheep."

Jesus was concerned about His flock. He had fed them the Word of God during His ministry, and now the responsibility was upon those whom He had called to carry on His work. With the call of God comes a great responsibility. To Peter it meant the preaching of the Gospel. To everyone it means a call to service according to his ability. To some it means a full-time service in the ministry; to others it means living a Christian life at their work and doing what they can for the Lord each day.

The third time came the question of the Master, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Deeper and deeper went the searchlight of the Spirit until the thoughts and intents of Peter's heart were fully scrutinized. Grieved lest the Lord should not again place confidence in him because thrice he had denied Him, from the depths of Peter's soul came the words, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

The Supreme Price

After this confession Jesus revealed unto Peter "by what death he should glorify God." In his last days Peter would be called on to give his life for the faith that he confessed. He could say, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21), and then follow that example unto the end.

"What shall this man do?" This question that sprang from the curiosity of Peter, concerning John, brought a lesson from the Savior that Peter had yet to learn: "What is that to thee? follow thou me." For those who would have eternal life let this lesson be learned: regardless of what anyone else might do, you can make the goal — you must make the goal!

QUESTIONS

- 1 What were the circumstances surrounding Peter's first call to follow Jesus?
- 2 In what way was this second fishing trip a departure from that call?
- 3 How many fishes did the disciples catch this night before they saw Jesus? Afterward?
- 4 How many of the disciples were present when Jesus appeared to them at this time?
- 5 Who were the sons of Zebedee?
- 6 What was their occupation prior to the call of Christ?
- 7 To what do you think Jesus was referring when He said to Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?"
- 8 What did Jesus say of Peter's future?
- 9 What did Jesus mean by the question, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"
- 10 How do the recorded works of Jesus compare in number with those not recorded?