

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1994

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DECEMBER 22, 2024

PART 91: DO YOU LOVE ME?

JOHN'S ACCOUNT

It is obvious that there is not an organized timeline of the events that took place after the resurrection of Jesus. The apostle John ends his Gospel with the story of seven apostles who returned to their hometown area and probably stayed in the same place that was close to the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) and the mountain where Jesus had promised to meet them. Having nothing to do, Peter decided to go fishing and the other six men went as well. They fished all night and caught nothing in a scene that was reminiscent of what occurred three years earlier when Jesus recruited Peter. **John 21:1-3; Luke 5:1-9**

The sun began to rise and Jesus stood on the shore unbeknownst waiting for them. He called out in an endearing way just as He had done in the past and rhetorically asked if they had caught any fish. **verses 4-5; John 13:33**

When they answered in the negative, willing to make Himself known with a miracle, Jesus immediately told them to cast the net out one more time on the right side of the boat for a catch. And just like the miracle three years earlier, the net was so full of fish that it threatened to sink the boat. **John 21:6**

The apostle John gazed upon the enormous catch of fish and instantly realized the man on the shore was Jesus. When he voiced his thoughts aloud to Peter, he impulsively gathered up his clothes, because he liked fishing naked, and dove overboard to swim the 200 cubits (300 feet) to the shore. The desire to see the great catch was gone, replaced with a burning desire to be Jesus. **verse 7**

The remaining men struggled to get the boat with the net full of fish to shore. **verse 8**

They left the boat and discovered Jesus had prepared a fire with fish were broiling on the hot coals and fresh bread to round out the meal. **verse 9**

The fire was not one started by the apostles, so where did it originate? Where did Jesus get the fish and bread? The fish on the fire were not from the same batch that had just been caught. John and the other apostles did not ask, but given what Jesus had done in the past, the God-man arranged the meal for the apostles to further solidify His deity.

Jesus instructed Peter to bring the fish to land and the heavy load yielded 153 fish. I'm sure this number was gratifying given their fruitless labor throughout the night. This was yet a further reminder of the large catch years earlier when Peter had been recruited. **verses 10-11**

The apostles were shy, knowing it was the Messiah risen from the dead, but no one dared to question His identity aloud. Jesus invited them to eat and took charge as He



had done so often in the past distributing it to the seven apostles. This “Lord and Master” action was all too familiar as they hungrily ate and waited to see what would happen next. **verses 12-14**

LOVE IN GREEK

There are seven words for love in the Greek language.

1. **Agape:** An unconditional and sacrificial love.
2. **Philia:** A platonic love that is characterized by trust and shared values.
3. **Philautia:** A self-love in regard for one’s own happiness.
4. **Storge:** A natural and protective love that exists between family members.
5. **Pragma:** A compassionate and practical love that's based on duty, obligation, or logic. It is quiet, understated and enduring.
6. **Eros:** A romantic or sexual love from which the word “erotic” is derived.
7. **Ludus:** A noncommittal love such as flirting or casual lovemaking.

The first five forms are found in conjugated forms throughout the Bible.

The one word of “love” covers all of these in English, but as we will see below, one word is not enough if we want to understand the message Jesus was attempting to convey.

JESUS AND PETER

The seven apostles sat around the fire and ate as Jesus served them. The God-man did not interrupt them while they were eating, but it is clear from the line of questioning that He wanted to teaching them something. Jesus singled out Peter and engaged him solely in conversation while the others watched the interaction.

When they finished the meal, Jesus turned to Peter and asked him a seemingly easy question. Do you love me? Peter responded affirmatively that he loved Jesus.

*“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest (agape)** thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I **love (phileo)** thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs.**” **verse 15***

When Jesus asked Peter the first time if he loved Him, the word used was in reference to an unconditional and sacrificial love. Peter’s response indicated that he had a platonic love for Jesus that was characterized by trust and shared values.

Jesus was seemingly giving Peter a chance to redeem himself in front of the other apostles. If you remember, just prior to Judas’ betrayal, Peter had famously declared he would never deny Jesus, even if the rest of the disciples did so.¹ After Jesus’ arrest and trial at Caiaphas’ palace, Peter had infiltrated the grounds where he proceeded to deny Jesus three times in quick succession while the kangaroo trial took place.²

¹ RLJ-1975 – Part 72: Gethsemane

² RLJ-1977 – Part 74: The Sanhedrin Trial

Upon learning that it was Jesus at the shore, Peter dove into the water and swam to the God-man. Why? Peter was often impetuous and his action was presumably based on love. The question asked by Jesus was a measure of how much Peter loved Him and an exhortation to nourish the young and inexperienced believers in Christ.

*“He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest (agape)** thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I **love (phileo)** thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” **verse 16***

Jesus asked Peter the same question a second time. Do you love me unconditionally? To which Peter responded, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you platonically.”

The God-man’s action of repeating the question was not unusual because it is natural to want an expression of love reaffirmed and repeated his desire for Peter to take care of the sheep.

*“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest (phileo)** thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, **Lovest (phileo)** thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I **love (phileo)** thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” **verse 17***

Jesus changed it up and asked Peter, “Do you love me platonically?” Feeling increasingly frustrated by the questioning, Peter replied in the same manner for the third time, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you platonically.”

Jesus recognized that Peter was not capable of offering divine love. Simon did not have it in him to love the God-man unconditionally, but Jesus nevertheless admonished Peter a third time to be faithful in regards to the body of believers that make up the church.

It is possible that Jesus questioned Peter three times because that was the number of times Simon denied the God-man before the crucifixion.

DIVINE LOVE

Peter and John worked as a team after the day of Pentecost and this indicates they had become close friends. They were fishermen who had worked together since they were children in the Sea of Galilee.

Peter’s personal encounter with Jesus on the beach of Galilee was only recorded by John. This meant that Peter never told this account to Mark, presumably because of his embarrassment at being unable to respond that he unconditionally loved Jesus.

The English language only has one word for “love” and the conversation between Jesus and Peter is meaningless unless the reader is aware of the two Greek words for love in use.

Jesus did not explain why Peter was incapable of expressing divine love for Him. Agape love only comes through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is why Peter could not offer unconditional and sacrificial love to Jesus.

It is noteworthy that Jesus did not want His followers to start ministering until they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit and were capable of divine love. Only then could they feed the sheep as Jesus instructed. **Acts 1:4-5**

THE PROPHECIES

Jesus prophesied over Peter and told him that when he was young, he had the freedom to dress himself and walk about as he wanted. However, that liberty would be restricted later on prior to his death. **John 21:18-19**

Here is what Peter said shortly before he was crucified:

“Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.” **2 Peter 1:13-15**

The exchange came to an end and Peter turned to see John and wanted to know his fate as well. **John 21:20-21**

Jesus gave him a terse answer that more or less instructed Peter to be concerned about himself. If the God-man wanted John on earth until the second coming, what did it matter to Peter? **verse 22**

Peter did not know it, but John would go on witness the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Those not killed in the rebellion were sold as slaves and dispersed throughout the Roman world. John would outlive the rest of the apostles and he was the only one that did not die a violent death.

One of the seven men in attendance started the rumor of John not dying, essentially remaining on earth until the second coming of Christ. **verse 23**

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?