



[John 21:4-12](#)

(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. (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. (9) When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. (10) Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." (11) Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. (12) Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

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Verse 4 reveals that none of the disciples initially recognizes the Lord. In fact, all the disciples consistently failed to recognize the post-resurrection Christ ([Luke 24:1-11](#), 13-16, 36-45; [John 20:14](#)). Physical and emotional circumstances notwithstanding, their failure was the result of weak [faith](#) or spiritual immaturity and the corresponding confusion and unbelief—spiritual blindness.

Following His resurrection, Christ changes ([1 Corinthians 15:44-45](#); [Hebrews 6:20](#); [Ephesians 4:9-10](#)), but His disciples, still lacking understanding, have not. Verse 12 provides insight: "Jesus said to them, 'Come and eat breakfast.' Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, 'Who are You?'—knowing that it was the Lord." While they eventually figure out that their Master, [Jesus Christ](#), is with them on the shore, there is something different about Him that they are unable to comprehend fully without His assistance ([Romans 8:5](#); [John 15:5](#); [1 Corinthians 13:12](#)).

After John manages, however, to identify the stranger on the shore as "the Lord," Peter immediately dresses and dives into the water to swim about 200 cubits (100 yards), eager to join Him on the shore. Contrast this passage with the first large catch miracle where all the disciples were "astonished" at the catch, while Peter, overwhelmed by the miraculous power of Jesus, begs Him to "depart from me" ([Luke 5:8](#)).

John's narrative indicates no hesitation on Peter's part to follow Christ's direction to cast the fishing net, this time on the right side of the vessel. This contrasts with the first large catch miracle ([Luke 5:1-11](#)) where a newly-recruited Peter resists His direction before submitting.

Subsequently, the fishing net is brimming with a massive catch, yet it does not tear, nor are any of the men anxious or overwhelmed. In fact, Peter jumps back into the water to finish dragging the miracle catch back to shore by himself. Conversely, during the first large catch incident, the net tears and the two fishing boats involved begin to sink ([Luke 5:6-7](#)).

Taken together, we see how the first large-catch miracle marks the beginning, while the second miracle signals the completion of the disciples' three-and-a-half-year education under God's direct tutelage. We also witness the disciples' efforts to overcome several challenges common to most Christians: learning to recognize or *see* [God](#); following His commandments in faith, and learning how to remain steadfast in the midst of overwhelming circumstances ([John 21:8-12](#)).

The narrative of the second large catch begins with an anxious and bewildered—perhaps even backsliding—group of disciples that struggles initially to identify their Lord and Master. Nonetheless, even with their initial lapse of faith, by the end of this incident, we witness good fruit from the disciples' unique and uncommon apprenticeship: their weak faith buttressed, their unbelief dissolved, and their capacity to serve wholly enriched by the presence of God.

Because each disciple's flaws are compounded in his Lord's absence, each will soon receive the indwelling of His Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Christ's commission, then, recognizes and rewards their growth and points to the beginning of their new vocation ([John 21:15-17](#)). No longer will they be only “fishers of men” ([Mark 1:17](#)), but soon they will work as pioneering ministers in the nascent church of God, tending and feeding all who are called into “the Way.”

— Martin G. Collins

To learn more, see:

[The Miracles of Jesus Christ: A Second Large Catch of Fish \(Part Two\)](#)

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