



"The more anger towards the past you carry in your heart, the less capable you are of loving in the present."  
—Barbara De Angelis

25-Jan-13

## *Breakfast by the Sea (Part One)*

Even as a child, Jesus understood that He needed to be about His Father's business ([Luke 2:49](#)), and His followers will have the same approach to life. We understand that our Father's business is to bring many sons to glory and to add an untold number of children to His Family. While the number being added has been quite small throughout these 6,000 years of human history, a time will come when there will not be a limit on who can know the Father and the Son.

An incident in John 21 contains a powerful lesson that must be kept in mind when considering our part of our Father's business. The first half of John 21 contains a significant miracle, the eighth and last of the Messianic signs found in the book of John. The miracle—a great catch of fish—is a strong echo of the time when Jesus called these fishermen three and a half years before ([Luke 5:1-11](#)). In both instances, the disciples had labored all night with nothing to show for their efforts, yet as soon as Jesus entered the picture, the same activity in the same spot suddenly started producing abundantly.

The physical blessing that the disciples received was an immense catch of fish, symbolic of those whom the disciples would help by preaching [the gospel](#) message and developing them as new disciples. When Jesus called them, He said, "From now on, you will catch men," and thus they were to be focused on bringing people to the Messiah.

CGG Weekly: Breakfast by the Sea (Part One) (25-Jan-13)

After the miraculous haul of fish, Jesus and the disciples have breakfast. When the meal is over, Jesus has something to teach Peter:

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep." ([John 21:15-17](#))

First, notice that Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him "more than these." It is not obvious what He is referring to in this phrase. Some have suggested He is referring to the nets, boats, and other aspects of their earthly profession, or perhaps He is asking if Peter loved Him more than he loved the other disciples. But there is another possibility, which has its genesis in the night of Jesus Christ's arrest:

Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples. ([Matthew 26:31-35](#))

Jesus predicted that *all* of the disciples would stumble on this Passover night. Yet, Peter was so sure of himself and so filled with confidence in his own strength that he proudly asserted himself above the other disciples. To paraphrase, he said, "Lesser men may stumble, but *I* will never stumble." He was essentially claiming to be spiritually stronger than the other men whom Jesus had also called and taught.

With this in mind, we can understand why a number of translations render Christ's question in [John 21:15](#) as, "Do you love Me more than these *do*?" What this indicates is that the word "these" indeed refers to the other disciples, but it specifically speaks of *how much* they loved Christ. That Passover night, Peter had basically claimed to love [Jesus](#)

[Christ](#) more than the others did. Now, Jesus brings this back around to see if Peter still held to his lofty opinion of himself, claiming to love Jesus more than the others did.

Notice also that with each question, Jesus uses his family name, "Jonah." The original Greek does not have the word "son" in these verses—Jesus simply calls him "Simon of Jonah." Names have special significance in the Bible, and it does not seem to be coincidental that three times Jesus makes use of the name of Jonah.

We are all familiar with the story of the prophet by the same name, and how, even though he nominally followed God's instructions, he is never shown fully surrendering to God's will. He eventually does what [God](#) tells him to do, but he resists God all the way through. Twice Jonah says that it is better for him to die than to live, and a third time he tells God that he is angry enough to die. Jonah would rather die than accept not living on his own terms.

In this we can see an aspect of Peter, though not nearly to the same depth of wretchedness. The various gospels record that Peter pledged to lay down his life, that he was ready to go to prison and death, and that he would die before denying his Messiah. When the time came for Jesus to be arrested, Peter pulled out his sword, and was apparently ready to back up his words—he was ready to take on the whole mob and go down fighting. Yet, he ended up denying Jesus three times. Now the resurrected Christ asks Peter three times if he loved Him. Three times Jesus calls him "Simon of Jonah," perhaps pointing out that he was not doing so well in completely surrendering to God's will.

Peter never asked Jesus if it were His will for Peter to follow Him to a violent death! Peter decided for himself what needed to be done and how he was going to serve God. Like Jonah, he seemed more inclined toward death than toward living life in a way that was not on his terms. Jesus planned to meet the disciples in Galilee after His resurrection, and He wanted Peter to strengthen the others. Jesus had already expressed that He would use the disciples in preaching to others. In other words, Christ's will was for them to live, and to carry on with what He had been training them for.

But Simon of Jonah had his own ideas. Because of Peter's willfulness, Jesus questions him three times about his love for Him. We will see how this conversation beside the sea resolves in Part Two.

- David C. Grabbe

## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### Post-Resurrection Lessons

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Focusing upon the post-resurrection accounts of Christ's ministry, Richard Ritenbaugh sees parallels between the reactions of the disciples and our own during times of upheaval: (1) displaying a state of shock, fear, and disbelief (2) having been conditioned by their backgrounds to disbelieve, and (3) not yet converted. On the Road to Emmaus we see the agitation, turmoil, and confusion displayed by some of his followers, being unable to put the scriptures and the physical facts together. The account of Thomas shows the necessity of taking God at His word, realizing that faith is the evidence of things not seen. The account of Jesus conversation with Peter reveals the intensity of commitment and concern for the spiritual flock Jesus expects His followers to have. Like the disciples, we should have all the proof we need, allowing us to have the faith to nurture God's spiritual flock.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### The Awesome Cost of Love

by John W. Ritenbaugh

We assess costs and values all the time in our daily lives: Is it better to buy used or new? Should we prefer traditional or contemporary? Paper or plastic? John Ritenbaugh employs the same process to God's love for us in giving His Son as the sacrifice for sin. What costs have been paid for our redemption?

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