

JOHN

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to John chapter 20 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we finish up the Gospel According to John. We have spent some six months going through this Gospel and how important it is as we will see this evening. John will share with us the reason he wrote this Gospel!

Now, in our previous study we saw that Jesus was crucified on Passover, Thursday and placed in the tomb before sundown and the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a High Holy Day.

So, Jesus was in the tomb Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and now, in our study this evening it is early Sunday morning and, as we shall see, He has risen!

Now the resurrection of Jesus is so important for us to not only understand but believe. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:16-19, **“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”**

If Christ did not rise from the dead we might as well all go home and eat, drink and be merry because our faith is empty, it is worthless. That is how important the resurrection of Jesus is to us!

But many have a hard time with this. Thomas Jefferson, was a great man, nevertheless could not accept the miraculous elements in Scripture. He edited his own special version of the Bible in which all references to the supernatural were deleted.

Jefferson, in editing the Gospels, confined himself solely to the moral teachings of Jesus. The closing words of Jefferson's Bible are these: "There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone at the mouth of the sepulcher and departed."

Jefferson just decided that miracles are impossible, so the resurrection couldn't have happened. That's the conclusion he came to, refusing to even look at the facts.

That is a sad place to be, with Jesus still dead in the tomb. But if you do look at the facts, they are overwhelming and thus, Paul was able to say in I Corinthians 15:20, **"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."**

I truly believe if you look at the evidence for the resurrection, you will see that He is risen.

Let me give you a couple of examples to show you what I mean. Dr. Simon Greenleaf of Harvard University, was a very verbal skeptic of Christianity. He wrote a set of books called *THE LAWS OF LEGAL EVIDENCE*.

Dr. Greenleaf was challenged by his students to apply these books to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He accepted the offer, and in the process he became a Christian. His conclusion was "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best established events of history, according to the laws of legal evidence administered in the courts of justice."

In other words, if you place the resurrection of Jesus on trial, the evidence is overwhelming, He is risen!

Also, the Guinness Book's record-holder for most successful trial lawyer, Sir Lionel Luckhoo, examined the evidence for Christ's resurrection and wound up giving his life to Jesus Christ.

This evening we will be looking at this historical event, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and we will conclude with the restoration of Peter!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in John chapter 20 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

JOHN 20

VERSES 1-2

John tells us that very early on that Sunday morning, before the sun had risen, Mary Magdalene, the one whom Jesus delivered from seven demons, came to the tomb. And she finds the stone rolled away and ran and told Simon Peter that **“They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”**

Now as you look at the other Gospels it can get confusing in regard to who came to the tomb, which women and what was the timeframe. Let me share with you what my Pastor wrote,

In reading the various gospel accounts concerning the resurrection day, there do seem to be discrepancies in the accounts. In some of the other gospels, they have Mary Magdalene coming with the other ladies. In the other gospels, they have the other ladies on their way back from the tomb, meeting Jesus, holding Him by His feet and worshipping Him.

So, what probably is the chronological events on . . . [Resurrection] Sunday morning is that Mary started off with the other ladies for the tomb. In her eagerness and desire to get there, she went ahead of the other ladies. When she came to the tomb and saw that the stone was rolled away, her immediate surmised was that they had moved the body of Jesus. She, without waiting for the other ladies to get there, ran to tell Peter and John that the body of Jesus was moved or that the stone was away from the door of the sepulcher.

The other ladies then arrived. They saw the angels who told them that Jesus was risen and told them to go tell the other disciples. In the meanwhile, Mary arrives where Peter and John are staying and she tells them that the stone is rolled away.

They come to investigate. They are running. In fact, we'll read that tonight as John tells us that they were running to the tomb together and that Mary no doubt decided to come back to the tomb.

But by the time she got back, of course, Peter and John saw the tomb and then they left. Mary then came back, not knowing that the other ladies had seen the angels, and at this time she looks into the tomb, sees the two angels and then meets Jesus as we will read in John's gospel.

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier

One other point here before we move on. John tells us that "**The stone had been taken away from the tomb.**" John uses the Greek word IRO regarding this stone being moved. And the idea here is that this stone was not rolled away but in this context, it means "to pick up and carry." No man could do that as this stone weighed some 1 ton!

Something happened, and Mary is not sure what! The tomb is empty, the stone has been picked up and moved to another location and thus, she goes and runs and tells Peter all that is going on. Notice what happens next.

VERSES 3-4

I don't know if I should admit this, but I think I have a lot of John in me. I love this guy. He tells us that he ran faster than Peter and got to the tomb first. John could have been a lot younger than Peter but in either case, I love the fact that John mentions that he beat Peter to the tomb!

And for me, I do love competition. I don't really like to lose. I am not a participation trophy kind of guy. You win, you get the award. You lose, you try harder next time. I see that in John, very competitive!

VERSES 5-10

First of all, as I read what transpired here, that the grave clothes looked like an empty shell, it tells me that the Shroud of Turin, supposedly the burial sheet that covered the body of Jesus, is a fake.

He was wrapped with linen strips and over His face was a cloth. When He rose from the dead He left the grave clothes where they were, an empty shell you might say, and the handkerchief that covered His face was folded and placed by itself.

This also tells me that the body of Jesus was not stolen. How can I be so sure? Because they would not leave things in order like this, they would get in and get out, but again, they would have to get around the Roman guards, which would not be possible!

So as John arrives at the tomb first we are told that John looked in and “saw” these things, BLEPEI in the Greek, and it speaks of seeing visibly, looking in.

Then Peter came, and he ran in and he “saw” these things, THEORAI is the Greek word and it speaks of studying carefully. It is the word we get our English word, “theory” from.

Then John entered the tomb and he “saw” these things, IDEIN in the Greek and it basically means “I get it.” It is the word we get our English word “idea” from. John believed something took place, he believed, maybe not to the extent he did when he saw the risen Lord, but he still believed!

He saw that the only way those linen cloths could be left in that condition is if Jesus just passed through them as He arose from the dead!

VERSES 11-13

Notice how John starts out here, “But Mary.” You have to love that. The love and devotion she had for the Lord. Peter and John left and here is Mary once again! She had been forgiven much; therefore, she loved much.

Now as Mary looked into the tomb she saw two angels, one was at the head of where Jesus was, and one was where His feet were.

Now, in saying that, their position at either end of the shelf where the body had been lying makes us think of the cherubim on the mercy seat (Ex. 25:17-19). It is as though God is saying, “There is now a new mercy seat! My Son has paid the price for sin, and the way is open into the presence of God!”

John makes this point in I John 2:1-2, where he says, **“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”**

Yes, God requires perfection from us, but the reality is, we are not perfect in a practical sense, we do sin. And because we have been adopted into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, we are perfect in a positional sense.

As the Father looks upon us the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all our sins, we are as white as snow! And when we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, a defense attorney, Jesus Christ!

The Greek word for **“advocate”** is PARAKLETOS, which means “one who speaks . . . in our defense.”

Now when I think of a defense attorney I see someone who manipulates the truth to get his client freedom. Obviously not all of them but some do.

But if Jesus did that, He would not be righteous. Then how does Jesus defend us, how does He refute the accusations that Satan brings against us? (Revelation 12:10). Because our advocate has become our propitiation or atonement for our sins.

You see, God became sin for us, He paid in full the penalty for our sins, enduring the wrath of God that was due us! Thus, Jesus does not defend us by manipulating the evidence because we are guilty before God.

What He does do is say that our penalty was paid in full by Him, and He can show the scars to prove it, case closed!

What is interesting to me is when they were translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, back around 250 B. C., the Greek word they used for Mercy Seat is the same Greek word that John uses for propitiation, HILASMOS!

In other words, on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and poured out the blood upon the Mercy Seat to atone for the sins of the nation, Jesus has become our Mercy Seat and it is His blood that was shed to atone completely for our sins!

In fact, Paul tells us in Hebrews 7:25, **“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”**

In regard to this word **“propitiation,”** Alford tells us, “The word implies that Christ has, as our sin-offering, reconciled God and us by nothing else but by His voluntary death as a sacrifice: has by this averted God’s wrath from us.”

It is as Peter said in I Peter, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”** I Peter 3:18. You see, sin is no longer a barrier between God and man, if you receive Jesus as your propitiation for your sins! Yes, sin can hinder our fellowship with God, but our salvation is secure in Him!

What is also interesting is that Mary is carrying on a conversation with angels and she is not moved, she is not comforted, why?

Because only Jesus can fill that void in her heart!

What a great lesson for us to learn from especially in the days we are living in.

Now, in Proverbs 8:17 we are told, **“I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me.”** Do you think Mary will find the Lord? You bet she will! Let’s read on and see!

VERSES 14-16

Why didn’t Mary recognize Jesus? Some say it was because it was dark outside. Others say it was because of the tears in her eyes.

Let me throw this out to you, for I tend to believe that is was because Jesus still bore the marks of not only the crucifixion in His resurrection body but also the beatings He took.

You remember in Isaiah 52:14 we are told, **“Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.”**

Or from The Living Bible, it says **“Yet many shall be amazed when they see him-yes, even far-off foreign nations and their kings; they shall stand dumbfounded, speechless in his presence. For they shall see and understand what they had not been told before. They shall see my Servant beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know it was a person standing there. So shall he cleanse many nations.”**

You see, He still bears the marks, the wounds of the crucifixion and the beatings, the wounds in His hands, the spear hole in His side and in Revelation 5:6 we are told **“And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”**

That could be the reason that Mary did not recognize Him. And think about this, the only one who will have a deformity, will be wounded in heaven will be our Lord, for our resurrections bodies will be perfect! For eternity we will have a witness of God’s love before us every time we look at Him!

And you have to love the devotion of Mary here. She just wants to find Jesus and she thinks that this man is the gardener and pleads with him to give the body of Jesus back to her if he has taken it and she will take Him away.

I don’t know how big Mary was, but I am sure Jesus was at least average size and weight. But Mary was willing to carry the body of Jesus, she loved Him that much!

I like the way that Tenney put it. He said, “Her words reveal her devotion. She never paused to consider how she would carry the corpse of a full-grown man or how she would explain her possession of it.”

To this, Jesus replied with only one word, **“Mary!”** And it was then that the light went on for Mary and she recognized this was not the gardener, it was Jesus.

How did she know it was Jesus? It is as Jesus said in John chapter 10, “**. . . the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**” John 10:3b-4, 27.

VERSES 17-18

Mary had a death grip on Jesus, she was not going to let go and lose Him again. Once again, we see this tremendous devotion to Jesus she had, and what an example to us.

Now why does Jesus tell her to not grip Him that way? Because she would not lose Him, He will see her again and she had work to do, to go and tell the others that He is risen and that is exactly what she does. One writer put it like this,

Jesus said, in effect, “This (the physical contact) is not My real presence for the church. A *new relationship* will begin with My Ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church.” Jesus then explained the fact of the *new relatives*. He called His disciples His brothers. Earlier He had said they were friends: “I no longer call you servants . . . instead, I have called you friends” (15:15). Believers in Jesus become a part of Jesus’ family with God as their Father (cf. Heb. 2:11-12; Rom. 8:15-17, 29; Gal. 3:26).

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier

Now as Mary, and the other women go and tell the disciples that they have seen the risen Lord, they thought they were crazy!

The Rabbis taught that “it is better that the words of the Law be burned than to be entrusted to a woman.”

Now Jesus appears to a woman, Mary, and I think the Lord is showing us her devotion to Him and how He rewarded that. She, as well as the other women were going to be a witness of the risen Lord.

Please understand this. The world may think we are not worthy, that we are nothing, and in reality, we are, but God shows us His love for us.

VERSE 19

John doesn't tell us about Jesus' meeting with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). Jesus stayed with them until after dark disappearing when He broke the bread at dinner with them.

And now it was Sunday evening. And the disciples of Jesus are locked inside because they feared what the Jews might do to them.

And as they are in fear of anyone coming in, all of a sudden Jesus is in their midst! I am not sure why they are surprised because Mary and the other women told them Jesus has risen, that they saw the risen Lord, but they were afraid!

And Jesus says to them “*SHALOM*” or “*PEACE.*” God does give us comfort during the most difficult times if we would only look and receive that comfort into our lives.

VERSES 20-23

Jesus shows them the wounds He received, and they rejoice that it is the Lord.

And then Jesus gives them a mission to continue on with the work He started and then He breathed on them and gave to them the Holy Spirit.

Now, for some who do not believe in the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a separate outpouring seen in Acts chapter 2, they say that Jesus just gave them a taste of what it means to be born again.

That is ridiculous, when Jesus breaths on you and says, “**Receive the Holy Spirit**” it happens!

Remember in John 14:16-17 we are told, “**And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**”

Up until this point the Holy Spirit was *with* them, but now, as Jesus breathed on them, the Holy Spirit was now *in* them, they were New Testament believers. And, in about 50 days from this point they will be empowered with the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit comes upon them and empowers them for service, to be witnesses of Jesus!

Now what is this thing here in John 20:23 about forgiving sins? Remember in Luke 5:21 we are told, “**And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’**”

If God alone can forgive sins, then, how can we? We can't forgive sins, but we can tell a person that if they receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in their life, their sins are forgiven. On the other hand, if they reject Jesus we can also tell them that their sins remain! You see, we don't provide the forgiveness, we proclaim it!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this regarding this verse. He wrote, "A correct understanding of the Greek text helps us here. Some years ago, I corresponded with the eminent Greek scholar Dr. Julius R. Mantey (now deceased) about this verse, and he assured me that the correct translation both here and in Matthew 16:19 should be: 'Whosoever sins you remit [forgive] shall have already been forgiven them, and whosoever sins you retain [do not forgive] shall have already not been forgiven them.' In other words, the disciples did not provide forgiveness; they proclaimed forgiveness on the basis of the message of the Gospel. Another Greek scholar, Dr. Kenneth Wuest, translates it 'they have been previously forgiven them.'

As the early believers went forth into the world, they announced the good news of salvation. If sinners would repent and believe on Jesus Christ, their sins would be forgiven them! "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:7) All that the Christian can do is announce the message of forgiveness; God performs the miracle of forgiveness. If sinners will believe on Jesus Christ, we can authoritatively declare to them that their sins have been forgiven; but we are not the ones who provide the forgiveness." Exactly!

VERSES 24-25

John tells us that Thomas was not with them when Jesus appeared to them. We are not sure why, but Maclaren gives us this interesting viewpoint. He wrote, “Thomas did the very worst thing that a melancholy man can do, went away to brood in a corner by himself, and so to exaggerate all his idiosyncrasies, to distort the proportion of the truth, and hug his despair, by separating himself from his fellows. Therefore he lost what they got, the sight of the Lord.”

So, when Thomas came the other disciples told them that Jesus has risen, that they saw Him. And as Thomas heard of this great news he doubted it, he wanted proof, he wanted to see and touch the risen Lord before he would believe!

Let me say this. There is a cost to unbelief; doubt, discouragement, despair, misery and-so-on.

On the other hand, with belief comes rejoicing, hope, encouragement and-so-on.

What state do you want to be in, what state do you want to live in?

VERSES 26-27

So, eight days later Jesus appears to His men again and this time Thomas is present. Jesus, knowing the heart of Thomas, encourages him to reach out and touch His wounds, which tells me Jesus was not some kind of ghost; you could touch Him in His resurrection body.

And that is exactly what Thomas does. Jesus is encouraging Thomas to believe! So often our doubts, our unbelief that God will see us through causes us all kinds of trouble. But please understand that God wants to draw out your faith, He wants you to grow. It is not easy, but listen to what He is telling you and then believe.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, “Often God does not condemn our doubt and He also often reveals and does remarkable things to speak to our doubt and unbelief. But doubt and unbelief are not desired conditions for the disciple of Jesus. If they are checkpoints along a path leading to faith they should be dealt with a generous love; but doubt and unbelief should never be thought of as *destinations* for the disciple. (David Guzik)

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 11:6, “**But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**” Faith to believe!

VERSES 28-29

Here we see that Thomas affirms the deity of Jesus by calling Him both Lord and God, not “a” god! If you still doubt that, if you have a hard time believing that Jesus is God, even though we have seen that over and over again in John, that He is God, then you are closing your eyes to the truth and you are refusing to believe.

Think about this for a minute. “For a Jew to call another human associate ‘my Lord and my God’ would be almost incredible . . . Thomas, in the light of the Resurrection, applied to Jesus the titles of Lord (*kyrios*) and God (*theos*), both of which were titles of deity.” (Tenney)

And there are many Scriptures pointing to the deity of Jesus but just for one, listen to what we are told in Hebrews 1:8-10, **“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’ And: ‘You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.’”**

If God the Father calls Jesus, the Son, God, I will believe it instead of the foolishness of what man has to say in regard to Jesus not being God!

Also, Thomas did not put on a mask of Christianity or faith, saying he believed when he didn't. It was only when his faith was real that he stepped forward and called Jesus Lord and God! How important that is as we live in a day when calling yourself a Christian is popular but living it and actually believing what the Bible says is another story.

Thomas saw and believed, and Jesus gives a blessing to us who have not seen the risen Lord with our eyes.

Today the world tends to say that seeing is believing but Jesus says that believing is seeing! How true that is as God calls us to walk by faith, to trust in Him, and as we do, He helps us to see more clearly!

Boice adds these thoughts to what Jesus is saying here. He wrote,

“I believe He is speaking, not of a subjective faith, but of a satisfied faith. He is speaking of faith that is satisfied with what God provides and is therefore not yearning for visions, miracles, esoteric experiences or various form of success as evidence of God’s favor.”

VERSES 30-31

Why did John write this Gospel? We don’t have to guess because John tells us. The reason he wrote this Gospel is so the reader would come to believe in Jesus! That is why this is such a great Gospel for unbelievers to read because it shows the deity of Jesus and how He came to save man from His sins!

In this Gospel John picked seven miracles while the other synoptic Gospels cover some 35 miracles, but John builds his case for Christ around these seven:

- 1. WATER INTO WINE – 2:1-11.**
- 2. HEALING THE OFFICIALS SON IN CAPERNAUM – 4:46-54.**
- 3. HEALING AN INVALID AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA IN JERUSALEM – 5:1-18.**
- 4. FEEDING THE 5,000 MEN NEAR THE SEA OF GALILEE – 6:5-14.**
- 5. WALKING ON THE SEA OF GALILEE – 6:16-21.**
- 6. HEALING THE BLIND MAN IN JERUSALEM – 9:1-7.**
- 7. RAISING LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD IN BETHANY – 11:1-45.**

As I have said, the Gospel of John is a great book for unbelievers to read because of why it is written, that people would come to believe in Jesus through it. And it is great for believers to read for it will strengthen their faith!

JOHN 21**VERSES 1-3**

The disciples are waiting as they were instructed to do in Galilee for the Lord, (Matthew 28:7). But, in waiting they got anxious, restless, they were not sure what would happen, so they decided to go fishing, back to the old life.

They didn't want to wait any longer and Peter got six of the 10 other guys to go with him. And notice what happened as they went out in their own efforts, it was dark, it was empty, they caught nothing, not even a minnow.

That is always the case as we step out for the Lord doing things in our own power, our own strength, according to what we want to do instead of what the Lord wants us to do, what He has instructed us to do, in His power!

It is also sad when we lead others in the wrong direction, as I believe Peter was doing here.

VERSES 4-6

Peter was a fisherman and yet, all night long he labored and caught nothing, not even a little minnow! Not too good.

Now it is morning and they have nothing for their labor. And there is this man on shore, they don't know it is Jesus, and He tells them to cast their nets out on the right side of the boat. Why did He do that?

Because they were fishing on the wrong side of the boat – obviously!

The thing I want you to notice is this great catch of fish was just on the other side of the boat, maybe 4 feet away or so, it was that close but when you are outside the will of God, it might as well be a million miles away. But, when you turn back to Him, look at the fruit you will receive into your life.

Do you want to do things in the power of your might or His? Remember what Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:20-21, **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”**

VERSES 7-8

I like this because they did not take the credit for catching all these fish. They didn't say “It is because of our great fishing skills that we caught so many fish.”

What did they say? They said, **“It is the Lord!”**

And that is always the case for our fruitfulness; it is the Lord and not us!

Now, when John says, **“It is the Lord!”** what does impulsive Peter do? Peter jumps in and swims to shore while John takes the boat in!

Keep in mind that the body of Christ is made up of people who jump in and others who take the boat in, a variety of different people working in a variety of different ways for the Lord.

Who is right? Both, neither are wrong, they both came to the Lord, but in different ways. A good lesson for those of us who like to try to make people like us, God uses a variety of different people in a variety of different ways and that is how a healthy body functions.

VERSES 9-14

That is a lot of fish to drag in. In fact, Tenney tells us, “One hundred and fifty-three fish plus a wet net would probably weigh as much as three hundred pounds, or more. The observation of the exact number of fish and the fact that the net did not break reflect both an eyewitness account and a fisherman’s perspective.”

As they come to shore there is a fire and Jesus is cooking fish on the fire as well as bread being there. I like that, the Lord prepared a meal for these tired and hungry fishermen. He does fill our hungry hearts!

Now here again is that strange idea that they did not recognize Jesus by His appearance, but they knew it was Him. How can that be? Once again, I believe it is because He still bore the marks of the beatings and the crucifixion in His resurrected body!

Now people have all kinds of ideas of why the 153 fish and I don’t think any of them are worth mentioning. When we are told that there were 153 fish in the net, it means that there were 153 fish in the net.

The one thing I want to focus on before we read on, and it will lead to what we will be looking at next, is this fire that Jesus made.

Think about Peter, the last time he saw Jesus was when he warmed himself by the enemy's fire and denied His Lord, prior to the post resurrection appearance of Jesus. But here is another fire and I am sure all those memories came flashing back to him.

Spurgeon put it like this, "They ate the bread and fish that morning, I doubt not, in silent self- humiliation. Peter looked with tears in his eyes at that fire of coals, remembering how he stood and warmed himself when he denied his Master. Thomas stood there, wondering that he should have dared to ask such proofs of a fact most clear. All of them felt that they could shrink into nothing in his divine presence, since they had behaved so ill."

I am sure they all examined their hearts that morning, but for Peter, was there any hope for him to be restored? I don't think he felt like there was!

VERSE 15

What does the Lord mean by asking Peter if he loved Him, loved Jesus more than these?

He could be saying, "*Peter, do you love me more than this fishing boat and that old life?*"

He could be saying, "*Peter, do you love me more than all these fish you have caught?*"

He could be saying, "*Peter, do you love me more than all these other disciples?*" Remember, in Matthew 26:33 Peter says, "... 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.'"

They all can apply because all these things can get in the way of a person's love for the Lord. And yes, there are many other things, but this was for Peter!

What is interesting to me is that the word that Jesus uses for "**love**" is AGAPAS or AGAPE love, unconditional love, sacrificial love.

But, Peter responds by saying that he PHILEIS the Lord or has a PHILEO love, a brotherly type of love.

Why the difference? We will see in a few minutes as we read on.

What is interesting also is that even though Peter had this imperfect love for the Lord, the Lord still commissions him to "**Feed My lambs.**"

How important that is today! Feeding the young ones in His flock! And keep in mind that the conversation had changed from fishing to shepherding. The former speaks of the works of evangelism; while the latter suggests teaching and pastoral care. Both are important!

VERSE 16

Once again Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him. And Jesus and Peter use the same Greek words for love only this time Jesus narrows things down a bit and says, "***Do you AGAPE ME?***" In other words, Peter do you love me unconditionally, unselfishly?

And Peter's response is, "***Yes Lord; You know that I am found of You.***"

And this time Jesus said, "**Tend My sheep.**" Poimen in the Greek and it is the word we get 'pastor' from. It means to shepherd, watch over, protect etc.

VERSE 17

Now Jesus asks Peter if he PHILEO's Him and Peter responded by saying that of course he likes Him, He is a friend to Him.

The key here, to me, is that Peter says, "**Lord, you know all things; you know that I love You.**" You see, before Peter thought he knew himself better than the Lord did.

Remember what we read in Luke 22, "**And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.'** But he said to Him, '**Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.'** Then He said, '**I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.**'" Luke 22:31-34.

Peter didn't believe that until after he denied the Lord and he found out that the Lord was right, that Jesus knew him better than he knew himself! He learned the lesson that when God speaks He knows better than we do!

The Lord restored Peter after his fall, not by Peter saying he was sorry, or by Peter promising never to do that again, but by seeing and facing his own error and to trust in the Lord, to move forward now, to learn that lesson. God wants us to love Him! You see, it is a matter of the heart.

I don't know where you are at tonight. Maybe you feel that the Lord is done with you. That you are on a shelf never to be used again. Peter thought he was done and the Lord is telling Peter that he has just begun!

Do you **LOVE** Jesus?

Now, one more important point here. In these three verses Jesus tells Peter to **“feed,” “tend,”** and **“feed”** His sheep.

The word **“feed”** in the Greek is BOSKO which speaks of feeding them.

The word **“tend”** in the Greek, as I have said, is POIMAINO and it speaks of the whole office of a shepherd. It speaks of “guiding, guarding, folding of the flock as well as leading it to nourishment.”

Some don’t make a big deal out of this, but I think Jesus used different Greek words for a reason, that it is more than just feeding them, but caring for them also. But feeding is important for he told Peter to feed them twice!

Peter denied the Lord three times and now the Lord gives Peter a 3-fold challenge to feed, tend and feed His sheep. That is the responsibility of any pastor and really, anyone who is helping a new believer to grow!

VERSE 18-19

I believe what John is telling us here is that these words of Jesus are referring to Peter and that he will be crucified for his faith. And Peter, when this came to pass, felt he was unworthy to die like His Lord and thus, he was crucified upside down!

It is interesting to me that Jesus here at the beginning of Peter going forward in ministry, is telling Peter what the price is going to be to follow Jesus. To feed the sheep. To take care of the flock of God. Peter, it’s going to cost you your life. They’re going to crucify you.

What is the cost of discipleship? It will cost you your life and the question is, “Are you willing to give it, are you willing to hear and obey the words of Jesus as He said to Peter ‘**Follow Me**’?”

Now in regard to how Peter died, “Ancient writers state that, about thirty-four years after this, Peter was crucified; and that he deemed it so *glorious* a thing to die for Christ that he begged to be crucified with his *head downwards*, not considering himself worthy to die in the same posture in which his Lord did. So *Eusebius, Prudentius, Chrysostom, and Augustin.*” (Clarke)

Also, “Jerome says, that ‘he was crowned with martyrdom under Nero, being crucified with his head downwards and his feet upwards, because he alleged himself to be unworthy of being crucified in the same manner as his Lord.’” (Alford)

VERSES 20-23

Peter sees John and asks the Lord, “Hey, what about this guy? If that is going to happen to me, what is going to happen to him?” And Peter is speaking of John.

And the Lord basically tells Peter not to worry about what the Lord is doing with others, but you follow Me, don’t be distracted.

It is not that we are to ignore our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but don’t be consumed with their lives, focus on what the Lord has for you.

Now there was this rumor that got started that said the Lord was going to return before John died. And could you imagine the excitement when John got sick, got a cold!

Then, when they tried to put John to death by boiling him in oil for his faith, can you imagine the excitement some had that the Lord was coming now, and then John lived.

You see, this was just a rumor, it had no basis in truth. Isn't it amazing how rumors can distract us from the real work. Don't let them!

VERSES 24-25

As I have said before, John wrote specific things down about Jesus for a specific purpose, that through the reading of this you would come to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that you would believe.

Once you have made that commitment to Jesus, then you must **“Follow Him”** and see the works that He will do in you and through you as you serve Him and follow Him!

It is as Jesus said in John 8:36, **“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”**

We, like John, are a witness of what Jesus has done in our own lives and how He has touched the lives of others, setting us free from sin, and thus, may we share that with others so that they too may believe!

Feed My lambs; Tend My sheep; Feed My sheep; Follow Me!