



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE
JOHN 21:15-25
LESSON: FOLLOW ME — April 15, 2018

INTRODUCTION:

The disciples see a fire of coals with fish laid on it, and bread to eat. Jesus tells them to bring some of the fish they had caught, and on the beach He had laid out a feast preparing breakfast for His disciples. Jesus tells them to bring some of the fish. Peter obeyed and went out and dragged the net to land, full of fish, even to the point of discovering that the net held 153 fish, and was not broken. They ate breakfast with the risen Lord, not even asking who He was. Jesus went around serving the bread and the fish. This was the third time that Jesus appeared to His disciples after he was raised from the dead (**21:9-14**).

LESSON: I. JESUS' QUESTIONS TO PETER JOHN 21:15-19

21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas,— It's important not to skip over this. Do you notice that Jesus tended to Peter and the disciples physical need of hunger before the spiritual? Yes, the spiritual need is more important, but in order to connect with a person, their physical need must be dealt with first, for it prepares the way for the spiritual. According to 1 Corinthians 15:4-5 Jesus had already met with Cephas (Peter) all alone in a private session to discuss Peter's denial which dealt with his sin, and to make sure he was fully restored; then He was seen of the twelve. So, now, the scripture lets us know that the meal was finished and Jesus and the other disciples are sitting around talking and sharing together. Jesus turned and focused on Peter. Jesus has to make sure that Peter would never deny him, nor fall back from his mission again. Jesus needed to teach the disciples the one basic essential for ministry.

None of them, not even a charismatic leader such as Peter could ever minister and bear godly fruit unless he loved the flock of God. A man may be the most gifted person in the world, but he is nothing and can do nothing of value in God's eyes unless he first **Love** (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Jesus called him "*Simon, son of Jonas*" by going back to a time in which he was most humbled in professing whom Jesus was. He had asked the disciples who do you say I am? It was only revealed to Peter by the Father in heaven, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus' response was "*Blessed art thou Simon Barjona*" (Matthew 16:16-17). "*Bar*" is Aramaic meaning "*son*" or "*son of*." That was an intimate time, now comes another sincere and intimate question.

21:15b ...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. And so we come to the questions. Do you see that Peter had denied Jesus three times and Jesus asks Peter three times about his love, even calling him

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by name Simon, son of Jonas? Jesus ask Peter, *"Do you love Me more than these"* (it's either the other disciples or the fishing he went back to)? Why would Jesus ask this, but of course Peter readily answer *"yes, You know I do"* [*Of course*]. But, Jesus always has a purpose. Peter had boasted of his loyalty before: John 13:37b *"I will lay down my life for thy sake."* Or Matthew 26:33 *"Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."* So this test comes around again when Jesus asks about His love for Him and says **"Feed my lambs."**

A **lamb** is a young sheep. Jesus is also called the **"Lamb of God"**. A young lamb or sheep is used as offerings in the Jewish sacrificial system. Jesus is **our sacrificial Lamb** in the sense that He died as a sacrifice in our place.

So, Peter is confronted with his love for Jesus more than going fishing, or more than just being around the disciples or more than anything that may come his way, because Jesus' passion is about the sheep. Jesus is asking Peter is he fully in love with Him. If so, he's going to love His (Jesus') lambs enough to feed them. **"The lambs"** are those who are just beginning in the faith walk; those who are immature and are going to make bad decisions: children, young converts, or those needing special attention. Peter had been through it. He can tell them how boastful he's been and had to repent when he denied and left Jesus. Now, Peter is to guard himself and be faithful to feed lambs gently.

Lambs signify beginners in the faith; sheep, those that are more mature. Therefore, he who loves Christ, and has charge of both lambs and sheep, will feed the lambs, meaning, provide them simple, gentle care suitable for beginners, and will tend the sheep, meaning, apply stricter care for those more mature in faith. But even the more advanced sometimes need gentle care as well, so the Lord instructs His pastors to feed the sheep also.

21:16 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. Now comes the second time that Jesus questions Peter's love. *"Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?"* And of course Peter says *"yes Lord, You know I do."* And now, Jesus says **"Feed my sheep."** The sheep are mature believers; believers who have walked and grown in the Lord for a long time. Peter is growing, and now, he's becoming a shepherd to feed sheep. Lambs become sheep, meaning they grow, mature and advanced. And shepherds feed sheep; keep and hold them together.

21:17 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. Now it is the third time that Jesus questions Peter's love. *"Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?"* This time upon hearing this question the third time from the Lord, he became grieved. But, he said *"Lord, You know all things, You know I love You."* And Jesus continues to say **"Feed my sheep."** I think this third time Jesus was more pleased with the true answer Peter gave because Jesus does know all things. And now that Peter said it, Jesus is able to calm and regulate Peter's heart.

21:18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst

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whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Jesus wants Peter to really get this by giving him this illustration to let him know that his life will not be the same after this. He's saying "*Peter, truly, truly, when you're young you were able to do what you liked: dress yourself and walk where you wanted to go (that is, pick yourself up and do these things).*" Spiritually, you can say this was before Peter knew Christ.

- He ran his life as he willed.
- Did what he wanted.
- Went where he wished.
- Talked as he willed.
- Chose the pleasures he desired.
- Chose the profession he wanted.

But, when Peter gets old, Peter can no longer live as he wished. He's gonna stretch forth his hands, and another will gird him, dress him, and carry him where he wants to go. So, spiritually, Jesus Christ, his Savior and Lord was now in control of his life. The Holy Spirit would teach him, pick him up, dress him, that is clothe him spiritually, and carry him places he would not choose or will to go. Since Peter was accepting the call of Christ to feed Jesus' sheep, Peter would have to:

- Live his life as the Spirit willed.
- Do what the Spirit wanted
- Choose the profession the Spirit willed
- Go where the Spirit willed.

Total commitment demands that we follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. He will keep us till death in these bodies. And therefore, Jesus is prophesying that Peter's freedom will cease.

21:19 **This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.** At first I thought this was Peter speaking, but this is Jesus speaking to let Peter know what kind of death that would glorify God. In fact He's allowing him to see that his hands will be stretched out and fastened to a cross which is what Jesus' crucifixion will do to glorify God. However, later it was said that Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die the same way as Jesus. After telling Peter about his death, still, Jesus commanded him to follow Him. That is, follow Me till death!

II. PETER'S QUESTION TO JESUS JOHN 21:20-23

21:20 **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?—** We have gotten familiar with these phrases: *the disciple whom Jesus loved... which also leaned on his breast at supper...* Of course, the person it's referring to is John. John was the youngest of the disciples. He is the writer of this Book; an eyewitness to the events and teachings he wrote about. He was a fisherman like Peter. He was one of the Inner Circle of the three disciples of Jesus. John was called the beloved disciple. He was the one Jesus asked to take care of His other after His death. He alone with his brother were known as the "*Sons of Thunder.*" Next to Paul, John wrote more New Testament Books than anyone else. John was a "*bad*" (slang) man!

21:21 **Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?—** Now, Peter having been told about his future: to feed my sheep, and about his death, and then told to follow Me, why would Peter take his eyes off all of that conversation, and place his eyes on John's

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future, and ask what Jesus has in store for him? You know how we do: start following and then begin to look at what others are doing, instead of being our best at what God told us to do. That clearly means that Peter has taken his eyes off of Jesus as he has done before.

- Walking on the raging sea to meet Jesus, he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the raging storm.
- Running away while Jesus was taken from the garden by the soldiers, he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the soldiers that would capture him.

In both instances fear took over rather than Jesus' Words of Wisdom or Peace.

21:22 **Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?** —Now, Jesus rebukes Peter. Jesus lays it on the line to say that the future of John was not Peter's business, even if He wanted John to live until He comes back. John's task was not Peter's concern. This is to say that we are not to look at another man's call and ministry because you will

- be distracted;
- wishing you had their ministry;
- or desiring some other ministry
- or just plain meddling.

21:22b **...follow thou me.**

- Concentrate on your own call and task.
- Focus your attention, will, energy, and efforts upon your own call and task.
- Realize that God knows where you can best serve, and that He calls you to that task.

21:23 **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?**—A story went out abroad among the brethren about what Jesus had said to Peter. Their story was that that certain disciple, who was John, would not die. Well, the conclusion of the matter all comes down to this, John clears up this error for us by simply stating in his Book that this story spread by the brethren was not what Jesus said. What is that saying the young people have out now? — "*Ear hustling?*" I guess that's what they were doing and was misguided and misguiding everyone else. **Jesus did say, "If He wants John to live until He comes back, it's still not Peter's business."** However, John was the longest living disciple of all the disciples. And he did have a chance to witness Jesus' return through the visions given him by the Spirit. And he recorded them in the Book of Revelation.

III. THE CONCLUSION OF JOHN'S GOSPEL JOHN 21:24-25

21:24 **This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.** Whether these last two verses are written by John, we can still conclude that John was an eyewitness to the events and teachings he wrote about. He was the one who gave true testimony of the many things Jesus did and what happened to Him. In John 19:35a he said "*he that saw it bare record, and his record is true...*"... **and we know that his testimony is true** could have been added after his death. John lived a long time, and wrote those things down about Jesus. His testimony was a true to the end, for he still witnessed through visions given

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to him by the Angel of the Lord while in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

21:25 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. There were so many other things of what Jesus had done that if they were recorded, he supposed that the world itself could not contain all the books that should be written of Him. There were three other Gospels each containing events the other writers omitted. We can read something in there the other does not have. All the things written for us in this Book were orchestrated by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Amen—so be it!

SUMMARY:

After eating fish and bread for breakfast there on the seashore, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him, for Peter had earlier denied Jesus three times publicly of knowing Him. At each one of those times Peter would always say, *"You know I do."* And Jesus commissioned Peter to feed His lamb and feed His sheep each time. In a picturesque way, Jesus contrasted the end of Peter's ministry with the beginning of it and went a step further to say how he would die. And Peter's death would bring glory to God. Still Jesus asked Peter to follow him (**21:15-19**).

Now, Peter having been told about his future: to feed my sheep, and about his death, and then told to follow Jesus, why would Peter take his eyes off all of that conversation, and place his eyes on John's future? He sees John and questions Jesus about John's future—what's his task? Jesus answers Peter by letting him know that it does not matter to him. Even if Jesus wanted him to live until His return, it should not affect him (Peter). All that was important was that he must follow Jesus! A story went out abroad among the brethren about what Jesus had said to Peter. And they had it out that John would not die, but John lets us know in the Book, that Jesus did not say this. Jesus said, *"If He wants John to live until He comes back, it's still not Peter's business"* (**21:20-23**).

The same disciple Peter was asking about is the same disciple who writes this book we're reading. John gives his true testimony of these things written. There were many other things that Jesus had done, that if they were written down he supposed that not even the world itself could contain so many books. Amen (**21:24-25**).