

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

JOHN 21:1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt

his fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

NOTES

Jesus by the Sea of Tiberias

Lesson Text: John 21:1-14

Related Scriptures: Luke 5:1-11; John 20:19-29; 21:15-25

TIME: A.D. 30

PLACE: Sea of Tiberias

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GOLDEN TEXT—"This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead" (John 21:14).

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Lesson Exposition

UNSUCCESSFUL FISHING TRIP— John 21:1-3

Introductory statement (John 21:1). "After these things" refers to the events of chapter 20. These include Peter and John's initial visit to the empty tomb (vss. 1-10), Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (vss. 11-18), Jesus' appearance to the ten disciples (vss. 19-23), and then His appearance a week later, when Thomas was present (vss. 24-29).

If the Gospel had concluded at this point, it would have seemed quite natural, but then we have chapter 21. Often referred to as John's epilogue, it contains information about an otherwise unknown appearance of the risen Lord that occurred at the Sea of Galilee, identified here by its alternate name, the Sea of Tiberias.

Return to fishing (John 21:2-3). On this particular occasion, seven disciples were together.

That Peter decided to go fishing should not be seen as unusual. He was, after all, a professional fisherman, along with his brother Andrew.

The other disciples decided to go with Peter. If they were hoping to catch

a lot of fish to take to market, these men were going to be disappointed. They caught nothing at all!

SUDDEN ABUNDANCE— John 21:4-8

A concerned question (John 21:4-5). Returning from a night of futile fishing, the disciples must have been discouraged.

As the disciples were making their way back to shore, Jesus was waiting for them. But they did not recognize Him at first. The light was probably still dim in the early morning, and there may have been a fog or mist hovering over the shoreline. We can therefore understand why it would be difficult to discern who was standing on the shore.

Calling out to His disciples, the Lord asked them if they had any fish. Since they had caught nothing, they answered no.

Profitable advice (John 21:6). Taking a tip from a stranger is not something most professional fishermen would care to do. But if what they have already tried has not been working, they might conclude they have nothing to lose. That being so, the disciples were willing to

follow the stranger's advice—namely, to cast their nets to the right of their boat in order to catch some fish.

Clearly, Jesus told the disciples to cast their nets to the right to remind them of the miracle they had witnessed near the beginning of their discipleship, recorded in Luke 5:1-6.

Since Peter, James, and John had all been there on that previous occasion, what happened next was an unmistakable sign that immediately revealed to them the true identity of this stranger.

Sudden comprehension (John 21:7-8). At this point, the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” presumably John, identified the figure on the shore. Since it was none other than the Lord Jesus Himself, John declared, “It is the Lord!”

Peter immediately put on his outer tunic (“naked” likely indicates he was clothed only in the undergarments suitable to his trade), jumped into the sea, and swam to shore. The other disciples followed in the boat, still dragging the net teeming with a heavy load of fish.

FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS— John 21:9-14

A hearty breakfast (John 21:9-10). Arriving on shore, the disciples found that a breakfast of fire-grilled fish, with bread, had been prepared for them by the Lord Jesus.

Jesus invited His disciples to contribute some of the fish they had just caught with His miraculous help.

A great number of fish (John 21:11). Obeying the Lord's request, Peter took it upon himself to single-handedly pull the net full of fish ashore. John tells us that although the net was heavy with 153 large fish, it suffered no fraying or tearing at all.

An invitation to dine (John 21:12-14). Although these seven disciples now realized that they were indeed in the presence of the risen Lord Jesus,

they were reluctant to ask Him anything about Himself.

Jesus took from the bread and fish and shared it with His disciples.

John tells us that this was the third time that Christ appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. John only records three post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples as a group.

John may simply be saying that this appearance at the Sea of Tiberias was merely the third one he was recording in his Gospel or that this was the third time the risen Jesus appeared to a group of disciples of which he personally was a part.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. What is another name for the Sea of Tiberias?
2. How many disciples are mentioned in this post-resurrection appearance?
3. Why did Peter decide to go fishing?
4. How did the disciples' fishing expedition turn out?
5. Why might Jesus not have been immediately recognized by the disciples?
6. What did the Lord tell His disciples to do?
7. What did Peter do once he realized that it was Jesus on the shore?
8. What had the Lord prepared for His disciples?
9. How many fish did the disciples catch?
10. What might John have meant in saying that this was the third time Jesus appeared after His resurrection?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The Lord shows Himself today in a myriad of different ways (John 21:1-2).
2. Sometimes we are so preoccupied that we do not notice the Lord standing right in front of us (vss. 3-4).
3. We can confidently do what Jesus says because of who He is (vss. 5-6).
4. We ought to leap at any opportunity to spend time with Jesus (vss. 7-9).
5. The Lord's abundant provision points us to His bountiful grace (vss. 10-13).
6. There is no mistaking the sure testimony that Jesus rose from the dead (vs. 14).

—Charity G. Carter.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Describe a time when you spent a great deal of effort on a task that proved futile (John 21:3). How did you feel?
2. Immediately after they caught the fish, one disciple recognized Jesus (vs. 7). What might have spurred this insight?
3. The disciples were only three hundred feet from the shore. Why did Peter jump into the water rather than stay in the boat a few moments?
4. What is the significance of Jesus showing Himself to His disciples three times (vs. 14)?

—Charity G. Carter.

Golden Text Illuminated

“This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead” (John 21:14).

The third time that Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, His disciples, including Peter, had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Appearing as an unknown figure on the shore, Jesus hollered to the men in the boat and asked their results. After hearing their answer, Jesus told them to fish on the right-hand side of the boat.

After they took His advice and made a colossal catch, John declared that the unknown man was the Lord, whereupon Peter immediately swam to shore. There Jesus had built a fire and was cooking fish.

The appearances of Jesus prior to this had been quite alike. In the first one, the disciples are hiding from the Jews with the doors shut. Jesus appears in their midst and tells them, “Peace be unto you” (John 20:19). Thomas was not present at this appearance and still doubted the Saviour's resurrection (vss. 24-25). So, at a later gathering of all eleven disciples, again “came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you” (vs. 26).

The third appearance was on an open shore. In our verse, John may be intentionally featuring the number three to transition to the next narrative: after Jesus was resurrected on the third day, He for the third time appears to His disciples to ask the same question three times of His disciple Peter, who had denied Him three times.

—David Samuel Gifford.