More than these?



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A brief excerpt of the study: The aim of this study is to explore what the Lord meant when He asked Peter, saying, "**Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?**" So, by unpacking the depth contained in this question we may be able to gain a fuller understanding of what it means to serve the Lord, as it relates to the New Creation.

We will begin with a prayer: We thank you, Lord, for this opportunity, our prayer is for your word to go out in the power of your Spirit so that it might bring repentance to the knowledge of the truth to those who hear, we pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Now, the main text of our study is from, John 21 verses 15 to 17, which reads, "Therefore when they had dined, Jesus says to Simon Peter, "**Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?**" He says to Him, "Yes, Lord, You know that I dearly love You." **He says to him, "Feed My lambs."** He says to him again a second time, "Simon son of John, do you love Me?" He says to Him, "Yes, Lord, You know that I dearly love You." **He says to him, "Shepherd My sheep."** He says to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you dearly love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "**Do you dearly love Me?**" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I dearly love You." **Jesus says to him, "Feed My sheep."**

In order to understand the questions the Lord asked Peter, we have to consider the events that took place when the Lord first met him. And Luke records the incident, beginning with the Lord preaching to the multitude at the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret while sitting in Simon's boat, after which He said to Simon, "**Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.**" And answering, Simon said, "**Master, having toiled through the whole night, we took nothing**. But upon Your word, I will let down the nets." And having done this, **they enclosed a great multitude of fish, and their nets were tearing**. And they beckoned to the partners in the other boat, having come, to help them, and

they came and filled both boats so that they were sinking. **And having seen, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus, saying, "Go out from me, Lord, because I am a sinful man."** For amazement laid hold on him and on all those with him **at the catch of the fish that they took,** and likewise also **James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.** And Jesus said to Simon, "**Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.**" Luke 5 verses 4 to 8. The details of this story are of great significance as it relates to the main topic of our study, from the people that are involved in this great catch, and the detail of the fruitless toil with which they laboured throughout the night, to the answer the Lord gave them saying, "from now on you will be catching men."

So, when John tells of the incident that surrounded the main text of our study, he begins by saying, "**Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias**. Now He revealed Himself in this way: Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. **Simon Peter says to them, "I am going to fish."** They say to him, "**We are also coming with you.**" They went out and went up into the boat, **and in that night they caught nothing**." John 21 verses 1 to 3. We have here seven out of the eleven disciples of the Lord, all going back to fishing at the words of Peter. And this is an important point because it is meant to illustrate the direction their choices were taking them at that moment. In that, the actions of Peter to go back to fishing was putting in danger all the effort the Lord had poured into His disciples for the last three and half years, for which reason the Lord had to intervene. As a result the events that followed after are meant to clearly mirror the first moment when the Lord first asked Peter "to let down your nets for a catch," three and half years earlier. So when the Lord called out to the disciples from the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, telling them, "**Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some**." John 21 verse 5. On the account that they have laboured throughout the night yet have caught nothing, however at the word of the Lord the result was such an abundance of fish they were not able to haul it in. And it is these sets of events that refreshed the mind of John, so he, recognising, tells Peter, "**It is the Lord!**" Not because he saw the face of the Lord or recognised His voice, but because he understood the similarities between the two sets of events.

Now, the Lord that multiplied five loaves of bread and a few fish to feed the five thousand, and the seven loaves and a few fish to feed the seven thousand, tells them "**Bring some of the fish that you have now caught**." John 21 verse 10. Even though when they came to Him on the shore, the Lord already had some fish and bread prepared on coals of fire. So, Peter going back to bring some of the fish he just caught is the main point for the conversation that is to take place between him and the Lord. So when the Lord asked Peter, "**Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?**" The inference is that the Lord is actually saying to him, "Simon son of John, do you love Me **more than these fish you just caught?**" And each time Peter answered in the affirmative, the Lord responded by saying, "**Feed My Lambs**," "**Tend to My Sheep**," and "**Feed My Sheep**." By doing so, the Lord was bringing to the mind of Peter what He had spoken to him three years earlier, saying, "**Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.**" That is to say, the lambs and the sheep are a reference to mankind that were born to be a New Creation.

When the Lord first called Peter and Andrew, and James and John, to the ministry of being fishers-of-men, each of the four Gospels gave a different name to the same body of water where the events took place. Both Matthew and Mark call the body of water the Sea of Galilee, in Matthew 4 verse 18 to 19, and Mark 1 verse 16 to 17. But Luke called the same body of water the Lake of Gennesaret. The difference between the two is as it relates to the application of the Hebrew language, and the Greek translation. And this is not without significance, Matthew as a writer to the Jews the reference to the body of water is according to the Hebrew name of the Sea of Galilee, the implication

of which is that a catch of fish that is to be had from among the Hebrews. Likewise, Luke as a writer to the Gentiles, the reference to the same body of water is according to the Greek name of the Lake of Gennesaret, the implication of which is that a catch of fish to be had from among the Gentiles. [Matthew 13 verses 47 to 50.] Pastor Joseph Prince also illustrated a similar point in terms of the feeding of the five thousands, where 12 baskets were leftover, and the seven thousands where 7 baskets were leftover, in regard to which he points out, the 12 baskets is a reference to the 12 tribes of Israel, while the 7 baskets is a reference to the Gentiles. [Matthew 14 verse 20, & Matthew 25 verse 37.]

And it is in the same regard John also refers to the same body of water as the Sea of Tiberias. The Lake was called Tiberias on the account of the Emperor who was ruling over the land of Judea when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. As Daniel says, "In his place a despicable person will arise; royal honors will not be given to him, but he will come in a time of peace and seize the kingdom by intrigue. Then a flood of forces will be swept away before him and destroyed, **along with a Prince of the Covenant**." Daniel 11 verses 21 to 22. For further assurance that this verse is speaking about the crucifixion of the Lord, refer to Daniel 8 verse 11, Daniel 8 verse 25 and Daniel 9 verse 26. So, John using the name of the Sea of Tiberias in relation to the same body of water, is seeking to signify to us, the application is in respect to the New Creation, that is neither Jew nor Gentile on the account of the Crucifixion of the Lord. [Ephesians 2 verses 15 to 16.] As the late teacher Derek Prince pointed out that there are three sets of people in the world: Jews, Gentiles, and those that belong to the Church of God. [1 Corinthians 10 verse 32.] And it is the importance of the New teaching which is according to the New Creation that the conversation the Lord had with Peter at the shores of the Sea of Tiberias is meant to signify.

And there is a vital lesson for us to learn from the words the Lord spoke to Peter, because the Lord is plainly stating to us what the ministry service to the Lord is meant to look like in the New Covenant. The beginning of which is the importance of being born anew, as the Lord said, "Truly I say to you, **if you are not converted and become as the little children**, you shall never enter into the kingdom of the heavens." Matthew 18 verse 3. And again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless anyone be born of water and of the Spirit,** he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God. **That having been born of the flesh is flesh**, and **that having been born of the Spirit is spirit**." John 3 verses 5 to 6. So, the Lord is telling us the importance of being born as spirits, which we are able to do through faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord, which we affirm in the act of water baptism, as ones who are dead to flesh in order to be raised to a new life in the Spirit. [Romans 6 verse 4.] As such the teaching that accords to these basic necessities is likened to the feeding of lambs, which Paul calls the first principles of the oracles of God. [Hebrews 5 verse 12.] That is to say, as great, and as profound the Cross of Christ is, in the expression of the ultimate Love of God towards us, yet it is considered milk. Because the Cross of Christ addresses the elementary principles of Christ that delivered us from dead works. [Hebrews 6 verses 1 to 2.]

And modern Christianity seems to be entirely focused on the food that has to do with the lambs, that is as it relates to the forgiveness of sins. But that is not where the Lord left His conversation with Peter, saying, "Tend to My Sheep, and Feed My sheep." Meaning, the Lord expects His flock to grow to maturity, and the greater portion of the ministry to the Lord is dedicated to shepherding the mature. Which Paul elaborates on saying, "For everyone partaking of milk is unskilled **in the word of righteousness**, for he is an infant, [that is to say a lamb]. **But solid food is for the mature,** the ones by constant use having trained the senses **for distinguishing both good and evil**." Hebrews 5 verses 13 to 14. The Words of Righteousness, which Paul calls solid food upon which the mature are to be

fed, is the food the Lord intended for His sheep. Please note, it is not about the forgiveness of sins, that is the basics of the faith, but righteousness, which is the foundation of the New Nature as spirits, according to which we are expected to grow in knowledge in order to walk according to His will. [Colossians 1 verses 9 to 10.] So the Lord starts with, "**Feed My Lambs**," in reference to the new Born in Christ, and ends with "**Feed My Sheep**," as it relates to the mature, on the shore of a Lake so named in association to His Crucifixion. In all honesty this should be jarring to any Christian since we are constantly fed on the food meant for lambs, but are left starving when it comes to the food meant for the sheep.

Now, many have mistaken the three questions which the Lord asked Peter to be an act of restoration, on the account that Peter had denied the Lord three times. In regards to which Pastor Joseph Prince pointed out that the restoration of Peter did not take place at the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, but rather on the day the Lord was raised from the dead. In fact the second person who saw the Lord after Mary Magdalene, was Peter, as Luke writes saying, "**The Lord is risen indeed, and He has appeared to Simon!**" Luke 24 verse 34. And Paul also writes, "He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and **that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.**" 1 Corinthians 15 verses 4 to 5. The point Pastor Joseph Prince was making was that long before the incident on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, the Lord had already restored Peter. And he makes the point that the manner the Lord restored Peter is not known to anyone, in that, a detailed account of the conversation the Lord had with Mary Magdalene is recorded in the Scriptures, and that of the two that met the Lord on the road to Emmaus. However, the conversation the Lord had with Peter is not revealed to anyone, it remains between him and the Lord. Meaning, the breakfast meeting over a coal fire on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias is not about restoration, but rather a course correction. The Lord was simply asking Peter, are you going to serve Me according to the purpose for which I called you, or are you going back to the old way of your life? In order to turn Peter from being a fisherman to a shepherd, from catching fish, to tending to the flock. [Jeremiah 3 verse 15.]

Now, from this account it is easy to see Peter's strength of character, in that, at his word half the disciples of the Lord were willing to follow him to go back to fishing. That is his natural expertise in his life-long profession made him a natural leader, and they all gravitated towards him. However, when it came to the things of the Lord it was entirely a different matter. We have to remember when it came to the Lord and in the ministry of His service, not one of them was willing to give place to the others, and they all squabbled and fought over to see who is going to be considered the greatest among them, time and time again. So, before Peter can be set among them to strengthen them in the new way they are to walk, the Lord said to Peter on the night he was going to deny Him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan **demanded to have all of you to sift like wheat**. But I begged for you, that your faith may not fail. And you, **when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers**." Luke 22 verses 31 to 32. But Peter, according to his natural strength, his response was, "**If all will fall away because of You, I never will fall away.**" And again, "**Even if it were necessary for me to die with You, I will never deny You**." Matthew 26 verse 33, & 35. However, once Peter had gone through the fire-storm in having denied the Lord, he had to be restored by the Lord in order to turn him back. So Peter, now knowing he has absolutely nothing to boast of in himself, and being the least in his own sight as one who denied the Lord, is ideally placed to lead the disciples for the purposes of God to the glory of His Grace. As the Lord said, "**The greatest among you, let him be as the younger;** and **the one leading, as the one serving**." Luke 22 verse 26. [Matthew 20 verses 26 to 27.]

In this regard, the late great teacher Derek Prince made the observation that when the Lord said, "more than these," the Lord was in fact talking about the fish, nonetheless he missed it on the topic of

conversation, which he presumed to be about restoration. In that, he assumed the Lord asked Peter three times if he indeed Loved Him, on the account that he denied Him three times. On the other hand Pastor Joseph Prince correctly identified the restoration has already taken place on the day the Lord was raised, nonetheless he missed the point that "more than these" is a reference to the fish and not to the disciples, which he concluded from the statement Peter made on the day he was going to deny the Lord, saying, "**If all will fall away because of You,** I never will fall away." And there is a point to be made here, in that both Derek Prince, and Joseph Prince each have part of the puzzle, but the fullness of the story is found in the combination of the two, in that it is the fish the Lord was referring to and not the disciples, and it is course correction He intended and not restoration.

Now, we need to give more evidence as to why the term "more than these" is not a reference to the disciples, and by extension definitively prove the conversation of the Lord with Peter had nothing to do about restoration, as it pertains to the act of denying the Lord. That is, it is made evident the Lord painstakingly took time to carefully restore Peter in a private conversation He had with him on the day He was raised from the dead. Then the question is that, why would the Lord now put Peter in a compromising position by reopening the tender wounds in the sight of the disciples? And if the Lord has already forgiven him, and cast away his deeds behind Him in the depth of the sea, why would He now turn around and fish them out again? This does not make sense, since it would simply invalidate the earlier restoration.

Having said this, there is an important lesson to be learned from the teaching of Derek Prince and Joseph Prince, in that, what we know, we know in part, and none of us have the complete whole. And this is a significant part of the way the Lord intended the Church to operate, in that each part worked according to the grace of the Lord for the benefit of the whole body. [1 Corinthians 12 verses 18 to 19, and Ephesians 4 verse 16.] So, what we seemed to have lacked or misunderstood in part is revealed to another, and only when we work together in unity of one body do we get the full revelation. Our responsibility is to recognise the part we are short on, so that we may receive what we need in meekness of wisdom. So, from the two we have the whole, – as far as it pertains to the general narrative of the events that took place at the shores of the Sea of Tiberias. For certain there is more depth and revelation that is yet to be had, nonetheless we have a sound structure upon which we are able to build.
