

Jesus and Peter

Key Verse: “*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, 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.*”
—John 21:15

Selected Scripture:
John 21:15-19

Jesus showed not only that he was alive, but that he was now a powerful spirit being who could come and go at will.

As noted, one of his appearances was alone to Simon Peter. We are told of this appearance by the two from Emmaus after Jesus opened the Scriptures to them. When they returned to Jerusalem, they told those gathered there, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” (Luke 24:30-34) Paul makes the only other mention in the New Testament of this appearance in I Corinthians 15:5, saying simply, “He was seen of Cephas [Simon Peter], then of the twelve.”

We can only surmise that Jesus knew Peter needed to

MUCH HAD HAPPENED

since resurrection Sunday. As mentioned in our previous lessons, Jesus had appeared that day to Mary Magdalene, the women who were with her, alone to Peter, two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, and finally to the eleven that evening, excepting Thomas. The risen Lord was not always recognized by his former human likeness, but by his voice and his manner of breaking bread. To his disciples he appeared miraculously in a closed room with none seeing him enter. Through these appearances

be encouraged for future Gospel work. The shame and discouragement from the three denials of his Master would have been a great burden. What tenderness was probably expressed on that occasion as Jesus gently, and in private conversation, lifted the guilt from Peter's mind. What a lesson there is for us to know that the Lord is ready to give us the same encouragement in our hours of distress, trial or perplexity. Jesus knows we are imperfect humans and reminds us that we are not defined by our moments of fleshly weakness, but by our heart's desire to serve him.

Now, perhaps a few weeks later, dining on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asks Peter "lovest thou me more than these?" Peter's prompt affirmative answer was, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." What did the Master mean by questioning Peter's love for him? More than three years earlier, we recall that Jesus, "walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."—Matt. 4:18-20

However, after three and a half years by Jesus' side, Peter had decided to return to fishing. This was in spite of the fact that the risen Lord had previously appeared privately to Peter, as noted earlier from Luke 24:34. Jesus undoubtedly was now asking Peter if his fishing business had overtaken his love for the Master. Was Peter willing to leave his fishing once again in the face of public prejudice and reproach of the cross? Was he willing to give up his business and social advantage to instead preach the kingdom of God, and as Jesus said in our Key Verse, to "feed my lambs?" Indeed, Peter left his fishing business once and for all and faithfully carried out his apostolic ministry. We are similarly asked, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matt. 16:24 ■