

MIRACLES OF JESUS

JESUS PRODUCES A CATCH OF 153 FISH (JOHN 21:1-11)

The resurrection of Lazarus anticipated the climactic event in the Gospel of John: the resurrection of Jesus (John 20). The death of Jesus was a devastating blow to the disciples. They were so overwhelmed with grief and doubt that, when news of the empty tomb started circulating among the fearful disciples, doubt—not faith and excitement—seized their hearts on that resurrection Sunday.

Everything when, later that evening, Jesus made a post-resurrection appearance to the apostles at a secret place in Jerusalem.

- The first was without Thomas on the evening of his resurrection (John 20:19-23).
- The second was with Thomas, one week later (John 20:24-29).

Fishing Failure (John 21:1-3)

Sometime after these two appearances, the disciples made their way back to Galilee, per Jesus' instructions (cf. Matt 28:9). While waiting for him to appear again, Peter grew restless. "I am going fishing," he told the others. As a professional fisherman, he worked the shores of the Sea of Galilee (called "the Sea of Tiberias" in v. 1) countless times. Peter was joined by six others, including James and John ("the sons of Zebedee"), Thomas and Nathanael.

They fished all night and caught absolutely nothing.

Fishing Miracle (John 21:4-6)

In the morning, they were approached by a potential customer who asked them, "Children, do you have any fish?" In their frustration, they gave him a one-word answer: "No."

He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish (John 21:6).

All of a sudden, their nets were full of 153 squirming large fish (see v. 11). Even more remarkably, their nets did not break, despite the great quantity of fish they took in.

Fishing Déjà Vu (John 21:7-8)

John suddenly remembered when he and Peter, along with Andrew and James, had spent all night fishing in these very waters three years prior (Luke 5:3-11). After a disappointing night, when they had caught nothing, it was Jesus who came along and told them where to cast their nets. And when they did, those nets were suddenly and miraculously full of fish.

John realized this was just like that moment three years prior. He turned to Peter and said, “It is the Lord!” As at other times during Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, they had been prevented from recognizing him (see John 20:14; Luke 24:16). But they just *knew* it was Jesus. They had no doubts about it.

Peter put on his outer garment, dove into the water, and started swimming. Unwilling to wait, he swam the hundred yards to shore. That’s how excited he was to see his friend, Jesus, again.

The Charcoal Fire (John 21:9-19)

Jesus already had a charcoal fire burning with cooked fish and bread laid out. He asked them to bring some of their fish, too, and eat breakfast with him. The only other time the Gospel of John mentions a charcoal fire was when Peter stood around one as he denied Jesus three times (John 18:18).

Jesus and Peter had some unfinished business they needed to address. Jesus, in front of the others, asked Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” Does Peter love Jesus? Of course, he did. And Peter answered Jesus without hesitation.

[Peter] said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs” (v. 15).

But Jesus wasn’t finished yet. He asked Peter the question again, but the phrase “more than these” was left off. Peter answered Jesus with the exact same words.

He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep” (v. 16).

Then, Jesus asked him a third time. Doing so distressed Peter because he knew exactly what Jesus was doing. He was giving him the opportunity to take back each of his three denials. Peter was forced to relive that moment when he had failed his friend.

Jesus let Peter take back his third and final denial from that fateful night. Jesus proceeded to tell his newly restored apostle that one day, he would die a martyr’s death. In the garden of Gethsemane, Peter had said, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” (Matt 26:35). The next time he was surrounded by enemies, Peter would be ready (cf. 1 Pet 3:15; 2 Pet 1:14).

“A Charcoal Fire”

Now the servants and officers had made **a charcoal fire** . . . Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

—John 18:18

When they got out on land, they saw **a charcoal fire** in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

—John 20:6