

THE LAST WEEK OF THE LORD JESUS ON EARTH
IXc. PETER'S RESTORATION AND JESUS' SEARCHING
QUESTIONS 3& 4 (cont.) Early Iyar (late April), A.D. 33

John 21:14-15

“¹⁴This is already ⁰third time! /Jesus was-displayed to-His /disciples after-being-raised-up out-of ⁰dead-ones. ¹⁵Then when they-finished-eating-breakfast, /Jesus says to-the Simon Peter, Simon of-Jonah^[Yōnâhs], [§]Are-you-persistently-loving^[sovereignly preferring over self and others] Me more than-these^{[men or things (fish, nets, and boat) or both]?} He-says to-Him, Yes, Lord! Yourself, You-perceive^[are-aware] that I-am-persistently-fond-of^[tenderly-affectionate-toward] You[§]. He-says to-him, Persistently-feed the lambs of-Mine!” (John 21:14-15 APT).

Introduction: What question did The Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ ask Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which brought to his remembrance his boast and denial? How does this question pertain to us all today? What is the highest and most effective motivating force in human life?

After His Resurrection-Ascension during the following forty days, The Lord Jesus very specifically and deliberately took steps to restore Peter to fellowship and discipleship before He ascended to Heaven the second time after His Resurrection-Ascension which occurred on the third day after crucifixion. Previously we considered Peter's Conversion and Restoration to discipleship

When professing believers in The Lord Jesus Christ seriously go astray from Him, they must go back to where they first started to follow Him as Peter did. Most often those who seriously go astray in publicly denying The Lord Jesus Christ as Peter did, want to just pick up where they left off thinking they did accept Him once, but without seriously considering the consequences that their previous behavior invoked. Now they need to go back to where they first started to follow the Lord and be converted and regenerated as Peter did and this time the persistent following must not be a long interruption. But immediately an interruption takes place repentance and confession must be forth-coming in order to be restored without delay.

We considered three facts in The Process of Peter's Restoration - his Spiritual Conversion (21:2-22).

1. The Circumstances: A Frustrating Morning in Galilee after spending the whole night casting and dragging nets fruitlessly, having caught nothing.
2. A Familiar Miracle: multiplication of fish to feed the eight tired and hungry disciples. One hundred-fifty-and-three equals fifty times three plus three more, a total of 153 great fishes
3. A Forceful Manifestation of Jesus' power and insight - miraculously fed for the third time.

Then The Lord Jesus persisted with Peter until Peter recognized and confessed his lack of true love, sovereignly preferring The Lord Jesus Christ above all others (both people and things) and substituting the word meaning 'affection' for 'ἀγάπη (ahgáhpay) Love'.

We then considered The Lord's Confrontation with Peter and the question asked three times, each of which He used to cause Peter to consider his need to 1/Recognize the Inadequacy of his Love, his self-denying, self-renouncing, self-surrendering, and self-sacrificing love; 2/Reverse his Indifference to the meaning of 'Love'; and 3/Reverse his Direction in love i.e. his affection, by insistently asking The Question that Searches: Sin, Stubbornness, and Selfishness within and calls for:

Sacrifice, Surrender, and Complete Submission.

Then we considered the five results of The Searching Question that The Lord Jesus Christ asked of Peter (Jn. 21:15) the first of which I. Searches the Depths of the Heart and Reveals the Inadequacy of Love. 'Loving' is the translation of the present indicative tense Greek verb *ἀγαπάω* (Aghapáhō) which indicates linear (progressive) action which never ends nor stops. Its literal meaning is 'persistently-sovereignly-preferring-over-self-and-others.' Jesus used this word which is the highest level of emotion in His question to Peter, but Peter answered Him with a word which is the next level lower than Aghapáhō or as it is recognized in English aghápay love (refer to Chart of "The Continuum of Love in The Greek Language" on Happy Heralds' Web-site under Charts). This level of love has four aspects in order to identify it. Each of these aspects were prevalent in the Life of The Lord Jesus Christ in order to provide Salvation, Eternal Absolute Life, and the enabling power and ability to implement them and The God expects them to be demonstrated in the life of those who appropriate His Salvation and Eternal Life in exchange for and as a result of receiving His gift of Love. These aspects are not produced by human effort but by appropriating them by faith even as Salvation and Eternal Absolute Life is appropriated. They are produced by The Holy Spirit in demonstrating gratitude as motivated by Him. Then we considered the question that The Lord Jesus asked Peter.

- I. This question Searches The Depths of the Heart in four aspects, which were examined and carefully observed in the life of The Lord Jesus Christ. These four aspects of *ἀγάπη* (ahgápay) Love are: Self-denying (Jn. 8:28,29; Rom. 15:3; Phil. 2:7,8), Self-renouncing - giving up one's will, interests, desires (Jn. 5:30; 6:38). Self-surrendering of: the will, the emotions, and control (Phil. 2:5-8), and Self-sacrificing (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:16; 4:9,10; Eph. 5:2; Jn. 15:13 cf. Rom. 5:10). The Lord Jesus Christ came out of *ἀγάπη* Love for the purpose of giving Himself as a sacrifice through an intense agonizing death on the cross of Calvary for you and me and the whole world including all of the sinful humanity of all time.
- II. This *ἀγάπη* (ahgápay) Love Searches the Desires of the Heart (Ps. 37:4) - The Question Reveals the Incongruity of Love, "Loving Me" in three aspects.
 - A. Rejection of Truth Displayed.

Peter displayed Rejection of Truth that Jesus revealed to His disciples what suffering and death was to come upon Him in ten months time. Peter rebuked Jesus for wven thinking of such a thing would happen to Him. Then in response to Peter's behavior, The Lord Jesus expressed rejection to Peter's reaction and indicated it was motivated by Satan.
 - B. Erection of Building Desired (Mt. 17:4,5).

Peter was caught up in a worldly concept of the populace concerning erecting a building as a memorial for famous religious leaders who have impacted their religion. But he was instantly rebuked by God The Father, calling out loudly from Heaven and called attention away from their action toward erection to put all their attention upon His Beloved Son. Then He caused them to see no one, neither Moses nor Elijah, but Jesus only.
 - C. Recognition Deprived (Jn. 18:10,11 cf. Mt. 26:51-54).

When the Jewish leaders and the Temple Militia came into the Garden of **Gethsaimahnáy** to arrest Jesus and take Him to the high priests' houses for trial before crucifixion, Peter struck the high

priest's bondsman with a short sword and cut off his outer ear. Instead of recognizing Peter's loyalty and bravery, The Lord Jesus rebuked Peter and told him to put his sword into the scabbard. then asked Peter. "53Do-you-suppose that I am not able at-this-present-time to-entreat My Father to stand longside Me more-than seventy-two thousand angels? 54How then should The Scriptures be-fully-fulfilled? Because it-is-absolutely-necessary to-come-to-pass in this way" Mt. 26:52-54 APT).

III. Searches the Delights of the Heart and Reveals the Intensity of Love.

"\$Are-you-persistently-loving [sovereignly-preferring-over-self-and-others] Me more-than these?" (v. 15 cf. Mt. 26:31,33; Mk. 14:27,29)-- genitive plural = men or things or both i.e. disciples, fishing equipment, and fish, all were the delights of Peter's heart. What are the delights of your heart which draw you away? which draw me away? In order for us to benefit from Peter's experience, we each must apply this question to our own hearts! There are three things that draw away from our intensity of one's *ἀγάπη* Love: Pride, Profession, and Possessions.

A. His Pride 'I' (Lk. 22:33; Jn. 21:3). That terrible 'I' gets in the way too often. Peter displayed that he had a problem with this. During the evening following the Seder observance and the introduction of The Lord's Supper to the twelve disciples and He announced His betrayal and gave Judas the morsel of dipped bread. Then Judas was excused and departed (Jn. 13:21-30). Then The Lord Jesus announced that he was continuing with His disciples only for a little space of time and then He was slipping-away to where they are not able to come (Jn 13:33). [It is amazing how much information concerning His Father' and what shall transpire in the future that Jesus revealed to His disciples and through The Scriptures to us today, if we will only study them prayerfully and carefully. But for most, it takes too much time and effort.]

In response to this statement that He is slipping away and they could not come with Him. After three more verses were spoken by The Lord Jesus, Peter interrupted and asked, "O-Lord,because-of-what am-not -able to-follow You\$ at-this-present-time. I-will-lay-down the natural-life[soul] of-mine in-behalf-of You\$" (Jn. 13:37 APT). This pride of Peter's is further displayed as he, the outspoken leader of the disciples, announced to seven other disciples, all of whom were fishermen before following The Lord Jesus and were continuing together, "3 . . . I-am-slipping away to-fish-continually[*present linear tense*]" And they said in response, "Also ourselves, we-are-going together with-you" (Jn. 21:2,3 APT). Here the linear tense of the verb translated 'to-fish' indicates that the time is not limited in anyway but is going on indefinitely. Thus he announced he was returning to his original occupation or profession which he had before he met The Lord Jesus Christ. This is the third time he returned to the fishing business.

Firstly, in Kislev (early December), A.D. 29, forty-one days after John baptized Jesus He began to gather disciples to follow Him. Peter was the first to be brought to meet the Lord Jesus by his brother Andrew, who had become a disciple of John The Baptizer along with a neighbor fisherman, before **Yahkōbohs** (James) the older brother of John, sons of **Zehbehdaiohs** (Zebedee) was brought to meet The Lord Jesus whom they found to be The Messiah (Jn. 1:29,34-42 APT). That first day in early Tebét (December), A.D. 29, the two disciples of John

abode with Jesus after they followed Him to where He was abiding (Jn. 1:38-40). Shortly thereafter the six went with The Lord Jesus to the wedding feast at **Kahnâh** (Cana) of Galilee. After that occasion the disciples went back to fishing at **Kahpehrnah-oûm** (Capernaum), where Jesus found them involved in their profession (Mk. 1:16-20; Mt. 4:18-22).

Secondly, then in Tebét (early January), A.D. 30 Jesus took His mother and brothers to abide not many (10) days where the disciples resided in **Kahpehrnah-oûm** (Jn. 2:12). Peter spent some time with The Lord Jesus, but also spent time continuing to fish as well. Then in Adar I (late February), A.D. 31, Luke recorded an occasion in which Jesus borrowed Peter's boat after he returned from fishing all night without catching even one fish. And after Peter finished washing the nets, then Jesus embarked into Peter's boat. He asked Peter to launch out eight cubits (c. 12 feet) from the land and began teaching the crowd from the boat. When He stopped speaking to the people, He told Peter, "Launch-out-to-sea unto the depth! And lower the nets of-yours for a-catch" (Lk. 5:4c-d APT). Of course being a skilled fisherman, Peter objected because there were no fish all the night, but he respected The Lord as Master and obeyed reluctantly and the net enclosed a large number of fish so that the net was torn into parts. Peter made a summoning gesture to his associates on shore who came to his aid. The catch filled both boats. In this way The Lord Jesus repaid Peter for the use of his boat and taught him a lesson on one's pride (of personal knowledge and dependence thereon) and complete implicit (without doubt or reserve) obedience to The Master. When Peter got back to shore, he fell prostrate before The Lord Jesus while saying,

"O-Lord, Exit away-from me! Because I-am a-man, a-sinner!"
Jesus replied to Peter, "Stop fearing! From the now, \$you-shall-consistently-be-capturing humans absolutely-alive (Lk. 5:10 APT).

Then after they moored the boats they abandoned all things and habitually followed Him.

Thirdly, again Peter needed restoration after he forsook The Lord and went back to fishing after The Resurrection-Ascension regardless of his previous experiences, so The Lord Jesus persisted in patience knowing how he can be useful after regeneration and used in regenerated power to further His cause and building His Church.

According to The Law given by Moses, Peter had backslidden three times and The Law restored him three times, but according to The New Testament after Redemption and Regeneration was accomplished and made available to all humans, backsliding does not exist and is not ever found mentioned in The New Testament. Such abandonment is termed apostasy after initially coming to The Lord Jesus Christ according to the stipulations that The Lord Jesus Himself specified and afterward rejecting Him as Lord and Master there is no recourse or recovery. "Backsliding" is an Old Testament term for the Jews before The New Testament was established and never has pertained to Gentiles. It is a term in a false gospel propagated by Satan and his emissaries. Now 'backsliding' no longer pertains to the Jews because it relates to the time before The Christ's crucifixion to provide Eternal Salvation, His Resurrection-Ascension, and The descent of The Holy Spirit to take up permanent residence in His Church and Her individual members.

Now after Regeneration this emphasis on 'I' should begin to

diminish! Have you found it does since you professed to receive Christ as Lord? Have I? Where do you and I stand with regard to pride?

B. His Profession ‘Fishing’ (Jn 21:3 cf. Mk. 1:16-18).

When Jesus found Peter first being brought to Him by Andrew, Peter was an experienced fisherman who owned his own boat and fishing equipment including all kinds of nets. The fishing business was his means of livelihood before he became a disciple of The Lord Jesus Christ. As noted above (Firstly p. 4), at first Peter was attracted to keep his hand in fishing. Then in Luke 4 he abandoned fishing and faithfully followed his Master, Jesus, until the arrest and abduction of his Master, then he fell apart. When he learned of His Resurrection-Ascension and then lost daily contact with The Lord Jesus, he decided to go back again to his old life-style. But that proved fruitless. However Jesus persisted to dig deep into the root of Peter’s problem until Peter acknowledged the difference between two kinds of love. And as many have done down through the centuries and continue even in our day to mistake the true meaning of *ἀγάπη* (ahgáphay) love meaning ‘sovereign-preference-over-self-and-others’ and instead substitute, in their mind as Peter did, *φιλέω* (feeléō) love meaning ‘kind affection, fondness, or friendship’ for *ἀγάπη* love. It is vitally important that every regenerated disciple realize what is the true meaning of *ἀγάπη* love and all that The God expects us to demonstrate in response. He requires us to put Him, His Son, and The Holy Spirit first and foremost as Master before oneself and others in everything we do.

It took three probing, heart searching questions to bring Peter to recognize the difference and acknowledge that he fell short of this love by finally acknowledging that what he meant in this matter of love was less than The Lord Jesus expected? How do you answer this question? How do I?

IV. This Question concerning *ἀγάπη* love Searches the Deceit of the Heart and Reveals the Inconsistency of Love in three areas: selfishness, stubbornness, and sinfulness - worldliness,

A. Selfishness (Jer. 17:9,10).

Jeremiah the prophet wrote concerning The heart that:

“⁹The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? ¹⁰I The LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 17:9,10).

It is The **LORD Jehovah** who searches the heart to determine the inner thoughts and intents of every individual. But the individual human reflects the inner thoughts and intents by his overt actions. Peter reflected such thoughts by means of his boast when The Lord Jesus told Simon that Satan demanded them all for Himself to sift them as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith fail not (Lk. 22:31,32). Peter’s answer was, “³³. . . O-Lord, I-am ready to-journey [in-company-] with You^s both unto a-protective-guardhouse and unto death. ³⁴But He said, I am saying to you^s, Peter, ⁰A-rooster will-positively not crow today sooner-than three-times ^syou-shall-utterly-deny-for-yourself that you^s are-aware-of Me” (Lk. 22:33 APT).

Peter never dreamed he would have done this. But we all have some selfishness dwelling within. Remember that Jesus taught, “¹⁹For out of-the heart exit: wicked contrivances, murders, adulteries,

sexual-immoralities, thefts, false-testimonies, blasphemies ” (Mt. 15:18 APT). These things all stem from selfishness. Most of us would think that we would never do such things but become surprised when we discover the reality of this Truth which Jesus taught and out of astonishment question, if only silently to ourselves, What have I done?

But when the love of and for The Lord Jesus Christ shines in, things are different! Have not you found it so?

B. Stubbornness (Ps. 139:23,24; Mt. 16:22,23).

The Psalmist, David recognized that The God knew all about him and submitted himself for close examination by searching his heart to reveal to himself what displeased The Lord and needed correcting to give him clear access to The God. He wrote,

“²³Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23,24).

Now Peter needed such searching in order for him to be restored to the position of discipleship in order that Peter would be able to be regenerated and indwelt by The Holy Spirit in c. a month later as Jesus had promised. Peter’s stubbornness stood in the way of that happening, just as it hinders The Holy Spirit from being regenerated and indwelt by The Holy Spirit to day. Remember what The Lord Jesus said to Peter when Peter rebuked Him after He informed His disciples of His soon coming arrest, abduction, trial, condemnation, and dying by crucifixion and Resurrection on the third day (Mt. 15:23).

C. Sinfulness - Worldliness (Lk. 5:8; 1 Jn. 2:15,16).

Peter recognized his sinfulness when he experienced the miraculous catch of fish (Lk. 5:8). Sinfulness is akin to worldliness because it satisfies the flesh. Worldliness is the quality of loving the world and that which pertains to it which results in Sinfulness and distracts from the *ἀγάπη* love for The Lord Jesus Christ. John wrote in his Epistle what sinfulness is in the sphere of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

“¹⁵Never love ^[sovereignly-prefer-over-self-and-others] the world, nor even the things in-the-sphere-of-the-world. If (and-it-may-be) anyone love ^[sovereignly-prefer-over-self-aand-others] the world, the love ^[sovereignly-prefer-over-self-and-others] for The Father is-continually-not-within-him.

¹⁶Because the everything in-the-sphere-of-the-world: the passionate-lust of-the flesh, and the passionate-lust of-the eyes, and the arrogant-display of-the manner of life |without The God| is-continually not of The Father, but-on-the-contrary, it-is of the world. ¹⁷In-fact the world is-progressively-passing-away and the passionate-lust of-it, but the one continually-doing the determined-will of-The God is-continually-abiding for ^{ever} ^[unto the ages]” (1 Jn. 2:15-17 APT).

We must suspend the remainder of the searching question until next time.

Conclusion:

Today we considered the second to fourth searching questions that The Lord Jesus asked Peter after He served the eight disciples that returned to the fishing business after toiling all night and catching nothing. We reviewed the first two questions that The Lord Jesus asked Peter, Are you persistently loving Me more than these? It Searches the Depths of the Heart and Reveals the Inadequacy of Love and the four aspects to this love which The God expects of us in return for His gift of Salvation, Regeneration, and Eternal Life: self-denying, self-renouncing, self-surrendering, and self-

sacrificing love. This question also Searches the Desires of the Heart and Reveals the Incongruity of Love; and it Searches the Delights of the Heart and Reveals the Intensity of Love. Then we considered the next three aspects of this searching question: III. Searches the Delights of the Heart and Reveals the Intensity of Love in three areas: Peter's Pride, his Profession, and his Pleasure. And IV. Searches the Deceit of the Heart and Reveals the Inconsistency of Love in three areas: Selfishness, Stubbornness, and Sinfulness which is akin to Worldliness. John the beloved disciple of love wrote that worldliness is the quality of loving the world and that which pertains to it. If we are attracted to everything in-the-sphere-of-the-world: the passionate-lust of-the flesh, and the passionate-lust-of-the eyes, and the arrogant-display-of-the manner-of life ^{without The God} is-continually not of TheFather, and therefore a distraction to *ἀγάπη* (ahgáhpay) Love for The Father and His Son, The Lord Jesus Christ. To which end of the spectrum is your love and mine drawn and focused ? Godward or Worldward?

Application:

What will you do beginning today to fix the focus of your *ἀγάπη* (ahgáhpay) Love upon The Lord Jesus Christ and The Father to glorify The Godhead?

Dr. Fred Wittman

For next week: Read and meditate upon: the fifth searching question asked of Peter by The Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 21:1-23).

V. Searches the Devotion of the Heart and Reveals the Insincerity of Love.

A. Submission (Jn 12:22.

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B. Surrender - Repent at once, constantly commit persistent trust and repeatedly confess that Christ is your Lord, Master in place of Satan, and Savior (Rom. 10:9,10; 6:12,13).

C. Sacrifice (Rom. 12:1,2).

D. Success in persistently Following Him in order to win (Jn. 21:19,22).

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C. Scripture records that ‘Peter was wholly turned’ (21:20) The Greek word translated ‘wholly turned’ is **ἐπιστραφεῖς** (epestraféh-ées) which is an aorist 2 passive temporal participle. This indicates that the action of the participle is considered to have taken place prior to the action of the main verb. The verb **ἐπιστρέφω** (epestréfō) which is composed of the verb **στρέφω** (stréfō) which in the middle voice refers to change of direction means ‘turn oneself about, change one’s course or direction, but in the active or passive voice it refers ‘to conversion and complete change of life and when the prefixed preposition **ἐπί** (epi) is added it indicates intensification and completeness. So whether **ἐπιστρέφω** is translated ‘was wholly turned’ or ‘was converted,’ either meaning is accepted according to context. Not only does this indicate that after this encounter with The Lord Jesus Christ Peter was walking and following The Lord in restored fellowship and discipleship, but he also was concerned about John, the beloved disciple. Although this

statement indicates Peter's restoration, he still displayed his carnal nature until after Pentecost. Note his carnal concern about John's future and what The Lord's plan for him was which was none of his business and The Lord Jesus implied as much when He asked Peter, 'What is it to You?' (Jn. 21:22c APT). We will suspend further consideration of The Proof of Conversion There is also another incident of display of the flesh before Pentecost which will be considered in a lesson after The Lord Jesus Christ Ascends to be seated on His Throne back to His Father in Heaven.

