

THE DISCIPLES SEE THE LORD AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

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Lesson: John 21

The Easter story tells us that the Lord rose from the sepulchre on the third day after certain men had put Him to death. The story also tells of the great joy of His disciples and followers when they saw Him after His resurrection.

You may think the Lord went straight up to heaven after He showed Himself once to His disciples, but he didn't. He showed Himself four different times to His disciples, over a period of forty days, and then went up into heaven. However, there is a very real sense in which He never left His disciples, but stayed with them. In fact, the Lord is still here with us, as we can know for certain if we learn how to see Him and how to know Him whenever we do!

The first time the Lord appeared to His disciples they were in a secret room with the doors locked, because they were afraid of the Jews; and the Lord, because He is God, came right through the locked doors and was seen by the ten disciples then in the room. But one disciple—Thomas—was not with them. He refused to believe what the others told him, saying, "Unless I myself can see the Lord, and unless I can touch Him, I won't believe."

A week later Thomas was with the disciples. They were in the same room they had been in when the Lord first appeared to them, and again the doors were locked, when the Lord a second time came through the doors and said to Thomas, "Thomas, come and feel Me and see that it is I, Myself." Then Thomas also believed and said, "My Lord and my God." The third time the disciples saw the Lord was on the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberius.

And the fourth meeting of the Lord with the disciples took place on a mountain in Galilee. There the Lord sent them forth to be His Ministers to the Church that after Him was to be called "The Christian Church." They were to teach men about the Lord and to baptize in His name all who believed in Him.

You may remember that some of the disciples were fishermen and that the Lord had said He would meet them in Galilee. For these reasons it was only natural that they should go to Galilee, and that while there, seven of them should want to fish.

Simon Peter said, "I go a fishing," and the other disciples said, "We go with you." They fished all night, casting their nets out and pulling them back to the ship, but they caught nothing. In the dawn, they saw a Man on the shore. He

was too far away to tell who he was, the ship being about two hundred cubits (one hundred yards) from the shore. This Man called out to them, “Children, have you any meat?” meaning, “Have you caught any fish?” And because they had not caught anything, they said, very sorrowfully, “No.” The Stranger then said, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you shall find.” They did what He said, and caught more fish than they could pull into the ship.

Now John immediately saw that this was a miracle and knowing that the Lord was the only One who could perform miracles, cried out, “It is the Lord!” Hearing this, Peter quickly plunged into the water and swam ashore, for he was so delighted to see the Lord. The other disciples rowed the ship to the shore, dragging the net full of fishes behind them.

On a former occasion, you may remember, when they caught very many fish by doing as the Lord directed, the net broke. But this time the net was strong and they caught one hundred and fifty and three big fishes. Then the Lord invited them to come and dine with Him.

Now, why did the Lord tell the disciples to fish on the right side of the ship? You certainly know that the Lord did not come to the earth to teach people how to fish. But if you understand what fishermen really are, then you will see what the Lord meant. The Lord told His disciples, “I will make you fishers of men.” He meant He would make them Ministers in His Church, to teach people the truth. He taught them to cast their nets out on the right side of the ship, by which He meant that they should teach people to do the Lord’s works, that is, to live the truth. If people did that, the Lord would be with them and the Church would grow and expand to fill the whole world. This is what He wanted to teach His disciples.

And the Lord was also teaching us. He wasn’t teaching us how to fish, but He was teaching us how to live. You who are born into the Church are just like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. You have the Word, and the Word is just full of truths about heaven, full of spiritual food; but you have to learn how to catch it for yourselves and use it in your lives. The Lord said you cannot catch it without nets. Your nets are your minds, and when you pay attention to the truths of the Word and apply what you learn to your lives, the Lord will be with you, to build up your spiritual character, so that you can become angels and live in His kingdom forever.

Let us remember, then, that the Lord did not return to heaven so that people could not know Him. But how can we see Him? We see the Lord every time we see something that is good. Every time someone speaks the truth and does the truth—learns the truth—he has the Lord with him. So if we catch the truths of the Word and live according to them, the Lord will come into our hearts and will feed us, as He fed the disciples on the shores of Galilee, after His resurrection. *Amen.*