



KNOW:TRUTH

The Gospel of John

A New Covenant Study

WEEK SEVEN | DAY FIVE

JOHN 21

Know: Read John 21

Note: Mark keywords, including pronouns and phrases.

Ask questions: (Use tools such as interlinear bibles to search the original meaning of words- [free tool here](#)) For example:

- Who
- What did you learn about Peter? What was he standing by when he denied Jesus and also when he talked with him?
- When
- Where
- Why
- How

Observation:

What: What does today's study reveal to me about the nature of God? What truth do I need to apply to my life today? Where do you see Jesus in your reading?

The Holy of Holies

The Holy of Holies was the most unique place in the Tabernacle. Where the Outer Court experienced the natural light of day, and the Holy Place was lighted by seven lamps, the Holy of Holies (or The Most Holy Place) was lighted by the very Shekinah Glory of God. The very presence of God rested on the Mercy Seat of the Ark like a cloud. No man could come near the Presence and live except for the High Priest, once a year, to make atonement for the sin of the people and who offered incense which represents prayers given as a sweet-smelling fragrance to God.

"Where sin abounded, grace abounds much more." Romans 5:20

In John 18, John interrupted Jesus' final moments to hover over Peter's infamous denial. Beginning in the Garden, as Jesus was arrested, Peter drew a sword and struck the high priest's servant Malchus. Since nothing is randomly mentioned in the Bible, I want to pause and dig into this scene.

Peter, whose name meant "Rock/Stone," used a sword to cut off Malchus' right ear.

- Under the old covenant, “stone” represented the law. God gave the law on the right side of Mt. Saini.
- Swords represented judgment, as we learned in our study of Cherubim.
- Malchus means kingdom or king.

Here, Peter is acting out of a position he has repeatedly returned to. When Jesus first met Peter, it had also been a bad day. Peter, a fisherman by trade, had caught no fish to sell. Perhaps amused at the fisherman’s frustration, Jesus called out from the shore that they were to go out and let down the nets once more. Doing so, Peter, astonished at the catch of fish, cried out, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Peter, aware of the Holy Presence before him, became aware of his sin and inadequacies. This scenario is repeated when Peter sees Jesus walking on water, and he joins Him in a surge of faith. Moments later, he sank when he got distracted by the waves.

John told us about the woman Jesus met at a well. Jesus did not condemn her. Instead, He offered her His living water which she received, and then gave her life to Him in total surrender. It was a surrender based on His love for her.

We also read about a woman brought to Jesus as an adulteress, religious leaders chomping at the bit to have her stoned. Jesus, the one whose finger wrote the law on the tablets of stone which should have condemned her, instead removed the condemnation and empowered her to “go and sin no more.”

We have seen the devotion of those whose sins had been forgiven give themselves to Jesus in complete devotion because they had been loved much. Five times John referenced himself as “the one whom Jesus loved.” When once nicknamed by Jesus a Son of Thunder because of the judgment he and his brother wanted to call down on a city, John chose to identify as the One whom Jesus loved. This is not a power play on John’s part. He is contrasting the way of love under the New Covenant.

In chapter 19, we see that John was given the honor of caring for Jesus’ Mother. As Jesus died, He entrusted her to the one disciple who scorned the people’s judgment to be with Him in His final hour. After Jesus was resurrected, John outran Peter to find out if Mary’s report was accurate that Jesus’ body was not in the tomb. While Peter went into the tomb to investigate, John needed no proof. He was filled with joy and hope because He had believed Jesus’ words about being raised to life.

Jesus was hard on the Pharisees because their hypocrisy prevented them from receiving His love. Their obedience and ability to keep the law is how they measured love, which was no measurement. The old was based on man’s ability to love God and obey. The New was based on Jesus’ love for man. Those that have been forgiven much love much. This was one reason why John highlighted the stories he did- to show that even in someone’s greatest sin, God moved toward them, and those that received His love identified as “loved by God.”

Peter was still stuck in the old system of self-effort. He based his devotion and love for Jesus on his ability to love Jesus, protect Him, and serve Him. John highlighted Peter’s utter failure at Jesus’ most vulnerable moments. Peter could not confess to Jesus when he was at his very

weakest; when he was frightened, Peter's ability failed him after he boasted that he would never fail Jesus. Jesus once said, "But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." Under an old covenant mindset, this must have been not very comforting for Peter. According to his understanding, his denial would have caused Jesus' denial of him before the Father.

Peter denied Jesus three times. The number three in the Bible is significant as it always follows a story of tragedy and then a resurrection. In Peter's darkest hour, right before Jesus' darkest hour, God was at work restoring what the law had veiled.

In Luke 22:31-32, we get more of the story before this event. "And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." Jesus knew Peter would deny Him, but he also prophesied Peter's return. God always meets us in our delusion.

After Jesus' Resurrection, He met with Peter privately. (1 Cor 15:5 tells us Jesus met with Cephas, who is Peter, before He met with any other disciple after His work in Heaven was finished.) We do not know what Jesus said to him, but it caused supernatural courage and strength to enable him to haul in a net of heavy fish when Jesus met them on shore. In contrast with Adam's response when God moved toward him (hiding), Peter ran toward Jesus when He received Jesus' forgiveness.

When once Peter relied on his own faith, his own strength, and his own courage to be the best disciple he could be, ultimately, he was a failure because he did not have the ability to follow Jesus. The contrast John makes at the end of his Gospel between the one loved by God and Peter is not narcissistic; it is intentional to show how self-effort produces failure, but the love of God produces great faith because it is not our faith that enables, it is His faith working in us that does. Peter had to come to the end of self-effort to receive Grace. (John's name means "Grace," Peter's name means "Rock").

Jesus' flesh was torn so that the Old system of self-effort would be done away with. He was the expression of the Father's desire that found fault with that way of approaching Him. Under the Old, Peter's denial would have struck fear through him "But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." He would have deserved this just punishment, but that was not the Father's desire. Safe and secure in the love of Jesus, all judgment was put on Jesus, and Peter now had access to the presence of the Holy One in the Most Holy Place without fear of rejection.

In the conversation between Jesus and Peter in John 21, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. He asked in three different ways:

1. "Peter, do you love (agape) me?" (Do you have a love for me called out of your heart by my preciousness to you, a devotional love that impels you to sacrifice yourself for me? Do you consider me more precious and love me more than these (fish)? *)
2. "Peter, do you agape me?"

3. “Peter, do you phileo me?” (Do you have a friendly and affectionate feeling for me?)

Jesus asked Peter if he had the kind of love he had claimed to have before- the kind of love that would lay down his life and sacrifice for God. Peter responded each time, “You know I phileo You.” Even though Peter would continue to return to a religious mindset at times, here, Peter admitted that He could not love with a God-love. He responded to Jesus’ love and denied his ability to love with the Old-Covenant demand to love God with all his might, soul, and strength. He felt affection for Jesus based on the love and forgiveness he was given. Where once, his love was based on love for God, which failed, he now knew the love of God, which produced the ability to endure, strengthen, and sacrifice.

If God has cleansed someone and taken away his sins, then he is holy. Holiness means “set apart.”

To be holy means that you are set apart. When you are in the world, you bring the light. You stand apart because you bring Christ. Sinners did not defile Jesus; He cleansed the sinners. Lepers did not make Jesus unclean; He made them clean.

Later on, in Peter’s journey as an Apostle, he went into a trance and had a vision from God where he saw a sheet with all of the “unclean” animals on it being lowered from Heaven and the voice from Heaven telling Peter to eat them. These were non-kosher animals that Jewish people didn’t eat, such as rabbits and pigs.

“And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’”(Acts 10:9-15)

God was not talking about animals but people. God called Peter to share the Gospel with the Gentiles, but until then, the church comprised only Jews. He was about to send Peter to the Gentiles in Cornelius’s home, and He wanted Peter to know that he was not to call the Gentiles unclean.

Unclean means unholy. Unholy means “common.” The opposite of holiness is not “sin.” The opposite of holiness is commonness. God told Peter, “What I have cleansed, don’t call common/unclean/unholy.”

“This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.” (Acts 10:16). Three times God said, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” Why three times? Do you recall that the number three is the number of Resurrection after failure?

The number three was a significant number to Peter. The Lord told Peter, “If I have cleansed someone and taken away their sins, and yet you continue to call them unholy, it’s the same as denying Me.” This was a hard lesson learned on Peter’s part. Peter understood what God meant. He went from that rooftop to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and said to them, “In truth, I perceive that God shows no partiality...” (Acts 10:35)

On one more occasion, Peter became intimidated by some Judaizers who would come in and try to get converted Gentiles to adhere to the Jewish Old Covenant laws. He had begun to enjoy the

foods and company of the ones once “unclean” by the standard of the law but then did a one-eighty when the Judaizers showed up. Peter went back to the Old system of holiness, which was to separate themselves from the unclean, and so caused division among the church. It would be the equivalent of a Christian leaving their friends and family today and moving to Timbuktu to separate themselves from the world.

Paul, in Galatians 2:14, rebuked Peter publicly. “I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”

He accused Peter of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is acting like something you are not.

Peter was a man who, among other disciples, was restored by Jesus and shown a better way of love. His understanding of holiness was re-defined. He was doing the complete opposite of what Jesus had shown him. Peter had been set free from the law, but he put himself back under it to please men. Because of the cross, we no longer live by the external accountability of the law. We live by the prompting of the Holy Spirit in the newness of life!

As this study concludes, I pray you received a revelation of God’s love for you. I also pray your beliefs about God were challenged to view Him in a way you had not considered before so that you could encounter a deeper heart knowledge of Him. Religion likes to lurk in places of our hearts. When the light shines on those areas, it may cause us to lash out in anger, but when we allow the light to shine on those exposed areas, and see clearly, our hearts begin to engage with Him.

To know God is to know His love and we become transformed. When our hearts have seen Him, we find that there is nothing to hide and nothing to prove nor earn. We simply receive all He has given and learn to live in His love. This is my prayer for you. ~ Anna

The End

* Kenneth S. Wuest