

Miracles of Jesus 13-01-27b

Let's continue our study now, we're looking in John chapter 21 at the second miraculous draft of fish, the miracle that the Lord Jesus performs at the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection. We have seen the background and the connection back to the beginning of John's Gospel. The details here are given to us as Simon Peter saying in verse 3, I am going fishing.

They said to him, We are going with you also. They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, Children, have you any food? They answered Him, No. And He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some. So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had removed it, and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits, dragging the net with fish.

Then as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish which you have just caught. Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to the land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three, and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

Jesus said to them, Come and eat breakfast. Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are you, knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.

This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after He was raised from the dead." Well, the more you look at this, the more interesting details emerge that at least make me scratch my head and say, Why does it say that? If you begin at the beginning, Peter says, I am going fishing. Now, he's gone to Galilee because the Lord Jesus said, Go to Galilee, and so he's there. I would expect that he would go back to his home in Capernaum.

He and Andrew are from there, Philip is from there, Nathanael is from there. He's from Cana, which is nearby, as we know, and, of course, of Cana isn't necessary. We know who Nathanael is, but it's mentioned because this also harks back, this is the last sign miracle that John records, and of Cana reminds us of the first sign miracle that John records, which is the water and wine at that wedding feast.

So this is a beautiful, not only theologically, but in literary terms, it's a wonderful

concluding section for John's gospel. John thought this out, and under the influence and ministry of the Holy Spirit, these things are here for a reason. We are supposed to remember, we are supposed to review everything that John has recorded, and he has just told us this in chapter 20, verse 30, Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you might believe.

What was the difficulty in the first and second appearances in Jerusalem? They were having trouble believing, believing that Jesus, although he had told them repeatedly that he would rise from the dead, they were having trouble believing it. He told them that day, I will go before you into Galilee, and they had trouble believing. And John says, look, I've given you the first and second accounts of Jesus coming back to encourage and instill some peace in the disciples.

I have written this book so that you might believe, so that the Lord Jesus will be a presence in your thoughts. And John has organized his gospel, as we saw when we studied this verse-by-verse, around those seven miraculous signs, and he has given us six. He says, these are written that you might believe, and this is sort of his Sabbath miracle, if you will.

So Peter has gone to Galilee, but Jesus hasn't showed, hasn't appeared, hasn't appeared, and he's getting a little antsy. It's always hazardous to get impatient with God's timetable. This was the downfall for King Saul, if you remember.

Needed to go to battle, waiting on Samuel to come offer the preparatory sacrifice, dedicate the battle of the Lord. The battle is the Lord's. Well, my army is looking at the odds and disappearing into the night, and Saul got impatient.

Samuel's not showing, not showing. So Saul finally says, well, I'll offer the sacrifice myself, and then we can get on with it. And just about the time the smoke gets up in the air, good, here comes Samuel.

And rebuke follows. Well, Peter apparently has been in Galilee, sort of twiddling his thumbs, and he finally, he's always sort of a man of action, and he says, well, I'm going fishing. The others are getting a little stir crazy, and they say, well, we'll go with you.

So they're going to go fishing. And of course, this is the old, this is what they were doing before John the Baptist was preaching. This is what they were doing before Jesus came.

This is what they were doing before the three and a half years that they spent traveling around with the Lord. And in a way, he says, well, you know, I don't know what was in his mind. There have been commentators that have sort of rebuked Peter for going back to his old life when he should have just been piously striking an attitude and waiting for Jesus to appear.

I don't know that it's a bad thing that he went fishing, but I can understand him being stir crazy enough to do so. And the others go with him. But of course, because this doesn't appear to be rooted in faith, and well, maybe I'll see the Lord on the water and we can try that walking thing again, his efforts, by the fact that they fish all night and catch nothing, you get the idea that this was somehow maybe not the best thing to be doing.

If he was supposed to be, maybe they would have had a wonderful night of fishing and ah, you know, the Lord is blessing us, we're in the right place doing the right thing. It's always a little bit of a time for reflection if we enter into a thing and it just seems like it's not blessed. Sometimes it's because God is fixing to bless it in a miraculous way.

Other times it isn't. But they go and they fish all night and they catch nothing. And then they look and see a man standing on the shore and they don't know that it is Jesus, and Jesus calls out to them and says, Children, have you any food? Children is not a good translation here.

In the vernacular and in the day, this is boys, lads, if you want to formalize it. People don't want to hear Jesus saying, Boys, have you got any food? So you can say, lads, young men, type of thing. But in the normal colloquial language, he says, Boys, have you caught any fish? He just sounds like a guy on the shore.

There's nothing to give away that it is the Lord. So, he said to them, Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find. Well, now there ought to be a little bit of familiarity.

John has been encouraging his readers to think back. These little notices of Cana and this particular list of disciples, you know, harking back to the beginning. And why would somebody on the shore say, Throw your net on the other side of the boat and you'll find them, which you have not found all night.

Peter especially ought to have some familiarity. We do not have time to go back and rehearse and review the first miraculous draft, but there is a wonderful comparison, contrast there. So they do, and they throw the net on the starboard side of the boat.

He doesn't just say the other side. He says the right side. Now, had they been fishing off the left side all night? Had they tried both sides? We don't know.

But Jesus says, Cast it on the starboard side, on a boat or a ship. Everything is relative as though you were standing in the stern looking at the bow. It has ever been thus.

It goes back to the dim mists of naval time from the first, probably on Noah's Ark. This is how they decided to call it. So the right side of the boat is the starboard side.

And so we don't know which direction the boat was facing. We don't know north, east, south, and west. We just know that Jesus specifies.

And they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved, this of course is John's reference to himself regularly, is the first to put this together. And he turns to Peter and says, That's the Lord.

Now, how many hours have they spent listening to the voice of the Lord Jesus? You would think as soon as he says, Boys, have you caught any fish? The reason they went to Galilee was to see the Lord Jesus. They've already heard Him twice now in post-resurrection appearances. But they have trouble recognizing Him.

His form on the shore, it says they're not far from the land. It's not like He was a distant, tiny figure. They are not far from the shore.

So He's visible. And they hear His voice carrying across the water. And when He says, Cast on the other side, they don't immediately say, I know that voice.

Now think about it. I don't care where you are, on what lake, in what boat. If I was standing on the shore, all of you have heard the sound of my voice enough.

If I raised my voice and said, Greetings, earthlings. Hello, children. Hello, family or whoever you are.

You would recognize my voice. It's puzzling to me that in the same way Jesus on the road to Emmaus was not recognized by men who knew Him for a period of hours. Not until He broke the bread were their eyes opened and they knew who it was.

Here, they don't recognize Him. Even after He speaks, they can see Him pretty well. And John figures out not from His sound, not from His look, but from what He says.

In the same way that the two on the road to Emmaus, Cleopas and the other guy, figure out who Jesus is when He prays to break the bread. Now they know. And this is consistent.

The women after He was raised, Mary thought He was the gardener. Now why is that? This is a consistent theme that occurs several times. Why is that? Jesus is known after the crucifixion, after the resurrection, not by what He looks like, not even by the sound of His voice.

It is by the content of what He represents. He is the fullness of deity in bodily form. It is He can be known by what is said about Him and what is said by Him.

And it is the content, independent of His presence. This is what communicates. That's why He can be just as real to us as He was to them.

They weren't necessarily reassured by the sound or by the sight. They were reassured by what He said. Peace be unto you.

I go to my Father. I go to Galilee. I will see you there.

All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth. And so on. The things that He said after His resurrection, it is the content.

And the Bible makes a point of this. And it is a reassurance to us. We don't need to see the Lord Jesus.

Nobody knows what He looked like. We don't have any paintings, photos, mosaics, representations, rock carvings, bas-relief, not even any descriptions of what Jesus looked like. We don't know how tall He was.

We don't know how long His hair was. We don't know, the Bible prophetically says He has no form or comeliness that we should desire Him. He wasn't magazine cover material.

The Pharisees and others had a difficult time believing He was the Messiah because He didn't look impressive. I think people might be surprised. If we get a chance to see what the Lord looked like in His first advent, He might have looked like your stereotypical Jew with a large nose and thick red lips.

It seems almost blasphemous to say this, but people had a hard time believing He was the Messiah even when they saw Him in person. It was what He did. He said, if you don't believe me, believe the works.

Believe what I say. It is what He represents and what He communicates. And that's the case here.

So they don't recognize Him. But when John hears what he says, John, who is the one closest to the Lord in terms of being loved by the Lord Jesus, closest to the Lord Jesus at the meal table, says, that's the Lord. I know from what He said, that's the Lord.

Peter hears that and he knows John. And it clicks in his mind. And so after they have thrown this net and they can't get it out of the water, John says what he says.

Peter dives in. And they were about 200 cubits away. A cubit is from your elbow to the tip of your fingers.

It's traditionally 18 inches. That's a foot and a half. They're 300 feet from the shore.

300 feet is roughly 100 yards. In fact, it would be exactly 100 yards. It's a football field, goal line to goal line.

If you throw really, really hard, you might get a football that far. So you can probably throw a rock if you've got a good arm that distance. That's how close they are.

So he dives in. And as soon as they'd come to land, they saw a fire of coals there and fish laid on it. Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish which you have just caught.

Now this net, which they could not drag vertically out of the water into the boat because it was so heavy. There's over 150 fish in it. But when they get it to shore, Peter by himself grabs this net and drags it out of the water and up onto land far enough away that the fish can't flop out of it back into the water.

I think he had a little bit of an adrenaline rush going. I mean, he was a powerful guy. But a net that five or six guys could not pull into the boat, he pulls horizontally out of the water and up onto the shore by himself.

I think he was very excited. And when the Lord said, you know, bring some of the fish, Peter is energetically able to obey. Jesus said bring some.

Well, Peter's trying to bring them all. Brings the whole net up. And these aren't just any old fish.

These are large fish. I like to think these are tilapia. They are native to the Sea of Galilee.

They're very tasty fish. And these are big ones. And although there were so many, the net was not broken.

And you think if there would be enough that the net should have broken and Peter is moving this by himself, you get an idea of his physical strength and power. Jesus said to them, Come and eat breakfast. Yet none of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? Now why does this even come up? Now that they're on the shore, now that they're standing within a few feet of him, and they see him and they hear him, does this not seem like a nonsensical thing? Why would there be any question? You're standing right there looking at him, listening to him, conversing with him.

He says, Bring some fish. Let's have some breakfast. And none of them say, Who are you? Why would that question even be mentioned? Because he does not look the same.

He does not sound the same. And there are some who aren't sure it's him. He has his resurrection body and it is apparently different.

It has the scars, we know, but it isn't recognizable. Some people have said, Well, is he still marred as he was because of the beatings and so on? But even that should have identified him. Well, this guy that's so beaten and scarred up, the only person I've seen abused to this degree would be the Lord.

And underneath those scars and bruises and so on, it must be him. But there is something different. It's a real strange thing that those who knew him best did not immediately recognize him by his appearance and by his sound.

Even now that they're on the shore, nobody dared to ask him, Who are you? Knowing it was the Lord by some means other than the way he looked and the way he sounded. And apparently this included the question, Why do you look so different? They didn't dare to ask that either. But there's something different.

And it's unavoidable and we have to deal with it. Why is this? Wouldn't it have been much easier if he had looked the same? But the disciples, I think, this is my conclusion. People say, Well, if I could just see the resurrected Lord, I would believe.

Let me put my finger in the nail holes and so on. Everybody after the resurrection has to take that fact on faith. Even his own disciples believe that they were dealing with the Lord Jesus on faith, not on sight.

Even his own disciples. After the resurrection, it's on faith. Mary in the garden thought he was the gardener.

When he speaks her name, then she knows who it is. They say, Well, her eyes were blinded by tears. Well, these guys' eyes aren't blinded by tears.

They might be blinded by sweat. But there's a principle here that all of us, it isn't a matter of sight, it's a matter of faith. And it's their faith that tells them it is the Lord, not their eyes, not their ears.

And the great thing is, we can be as close to the Lord Jesus as the disciples. We can have the same reality because we hear what he says, we know the content, we know him by what he said and what he did, just as they do after the resurrection. Even their previous experience doesn't really aid them in this.

It's their faith. And in a way, it's an encouragement. And I think it's why John writes what he says in verse 30 of the preceding chapter, 30 and 31.

These are written that you may believe. You can be these disciples. And why didn't he put this at the end of the book? They say, Well, that's really the formal conclusion of the book, is this.

And maybe this other is a tack on. No. John leads with this before this final miracle to remind us that we can be on the shore having breakfast with the Lord Jesus.

He can be sharing bread and fish with us. And this is the third time, you know, after two days, on the third day. The three always, I was musing on this because people that tell stories and somebody tries a thing the first time and it doesn't work, the second time and it doesn't work, and the third time, you know, innumerable humorous stories have been built on this model.

You know, he went the first time, he went the second time. Dr. Criswell tells a story of a

wild mallard duck that has its wing broken and a farmer finds it and he binds up the wing and puts it with his domestic ducks and it heals up and it spends time. But then all the wild ducks begin to migrate and overhead are these flocks flying across and the farmer has tied a string and a rock to this duck so that he won't wander off.

And so when the wild duck hears the call of his like wild ducks flying across, he tries to rise and join them. Well, he tries the first time and the rock and the string bring him back to the earth and he tries the second time and the rock and the string bring him back. But finally with a mighty beat of his wings and a, you know, motivation, he breaks the string and he joins his wild, you know, he heeds the call.

It's an irresistible call and he goes on to make an illustration from that. But it's always, you know, two tries you fail and the third time you get there. And it's a long, long-standing tradition.

But it's a reminder to us, you know, we have a saying, if at first you don't succeed, try again. But why does the Bible use this model? Why does it enter into it and make it so archetypal? Because we can have difficulty getting there. We can fail as Thomas did.

I'm not going to believe until. We struggle and it is such as is common to man. We saw the scripture out of Corinthians, you know, no temptation has befallen you but such as is common to man.

And we struggle and failure is not the end. And it shouldn't dissuade us or discourage us. We keep trying.

Sometimes it takes two tries. Sometimes it takes three tries. We err and fall short again and again.

But the credit belongs to the guy, as T.R. said, that gets back up. Doesn't matter how much blood and sweat and dust, you get back up. And you know the great devotions and the great enthusiasms in life.

This is a biblical principle. And it's evidenced here. This third time is when Jesus is going to heal Peter's discouragement and self-loathing over his betrayal, his denial on the night of Jesus' betrayal.

And Jesus is going to ask him how many times, Simon, do you love me? Three times. There are a lot of threes here. But let me get to the, in the time that remains, the infamous number of fish.

Why does John give us 153 fish? We've talked about this before. 12 times 12 is 144. And then you've got nine more after that, which is the perfect square of three.

And you think, well, let's see, 12 times 12 plus 3 times 3. And 12 is the number of Israel.

Three is the number of God. And you can do all sorts of things.

But this is a really interesting number. And I, for aid in this, if any time you get interested in a biblical number, this is where you go. This is E.W. Bullinger and Number in Scripture.

Bullinger has got some really good resources. This is not the only one. But this is a good one.

And any thought that has ever been had about any biblical number is in this book. And in the sake of time, I've done some work on this on my own. But I'm going to give you largely, most of my conclusions ended up falling into the shadow of what Bullinger has got here.

So let me just give you a summary of what he says about this number. And by the way, it has got a two, four, six, five and a half pages on 153. So not bad.

And this has been a puzzle going back to the dawn of time. Jerome wrote about this. Augustine wrote about the 153.

And I'm going to skip some of the more fanciful constructions. Bullinger says, more surprising suggestions have been made, but they are all the outcome of fancy. And believe me, there's a lot of fanciful stuff.

The utmost that can be said is that had it been the round number 150, there would have been an absence of all definiteness. But as it goes beyond and gives the three by which the 150 is exceeded, it seems to convey the impression that we have here, if these fishes are a symbol of the saved, an illustration confirmation of our Lord's words recorded in the same gospel, of all that the Father had given me, I should lose nothing. Those that thou gavest me, I've kept and none of them is lost.

Augustine and Jerome and others have all seen this as these are the men. I will make you fishers of men. And that it could be 153 different kinds of men or et cetera.

Augustine does make an interesting observation. And that is that 153 is a sum type of number. And there's a name for this in math and I forget what it is because I'm not a math guy.

But if you take all of the numbers and add them together, take one and then add two to one and then add three to that, add four to that, add five to that, add six. So one plus two plus three plus four plus five and you go all the way up to 17. The total is 153.

If you just add all of those numbers together, 17 and below, that's your sum, 153. So Bishop Wordsworth arrives at his result in a different manner. He uses two numbers and employs multiplication and addition.

So you've got the 12 times 12 and the 3 times 3. That's been thought of long ago.

Bullinger says, we might give another contribution to these various modes. Say that 153 equals 9 times 17 and see in this number all judgment.

Nine, exhausted for the people of God, 17 in the person of their surety. All, however, agree in the great and blessed fact that salvation is of the Lord, divine alike in its source, its agency and its results. The same divine character is stamped on this miracle and its lessons by the number of disciples present when it was wrought.

There were seven. Seven divides into three and four as usual. Three being named and four unnamed because even though it says the sons of Zebedee, they're not specifically named and so on.

The one lesson that remains is true, namely the whole number of the redeemed are saved by the power of the triune God. We may condense all this by calling 153 simply the number of the sons of God. The expression, B'nai ha Elohim, sons of God, occurs seven times in Scripture.

The gematria of this expression is exactly 153. So if you put the bait and the noon and the yod for B'nai and then the hay for ha and then the aleph, the lamed, the hay, the yod and the maim for the name Elohim, there are numbers for each of the Hebrew letters. If you add up B'nai ha Elohim, the value of the consonants, it adds to 153.

Interesting, no? In Greek, the expression exhibits in another form the same phenomenon, the gematria being 3213 or 3 times 7 times 153. So that's somewhat unusual. It is very remarkable in connection with this that in Job 2.1, we have B'nai ha Elohim with Satan among them.

The gematria of this phrase is 1989 and the two factors of this number are 153 and 13. 13 times 153 gives you 1989, which is the consonantal value of that statement in Job 2.1. If you just break that down to its Hebrew numbers, it's 13 times 153. Like Johnny Carson, I did not know that.

The word sun-kleronimoi, joint errors in Romans 8.17, amounts to 1071, the factors of which are 153 and 7. 7 times 153 gives you the coerce word in Greek. Now some of this gets a little on the woolly edge. I'm just telling it to you because it is a fact.

Whether it's a pertinent fact is another matter, but it is a fact. And it's kind of interesting. The expression sun-kleronimoi de Christu, coerce with Christ, joint errors with Christ, Romans 8.17, amounts to 2751.

The factors of 153 are 9 and 17. The number 2751 is 3 times the 900 plus 17, so you get 2751. That really is on the woolly edge.

Quite a new thought has recently been given by Lieutenant Colonel F. Roberts, who finds that amongst the multitudes who receive direct blessing from Christ, there are recorded

exactly 153 special individual cases. And a page and a half of what I said was covered in here are the Scripture references for each individual that Jesus is said to have interacted with in the Gospels. The list is here, and there are in fact 153 notices in the four Gospels of people with whom Jesus spoke, acted, healed, etc.

This includes the 10 lepers, all the people that we have seen in the 35 previous miracles that we have covered, the centurion, Salome, the blind man, the dumb man, the 11 apostles, man with the wither hand, the impotent man, the woman taken in adultery, man born blind, Lazarus, call him Larry for short, Mary the mother of Jesus, and so on. We give the above not as an alternate solution, but as an additional illustration, believing that all may be true, and at any rate, all contribute to and increase the cumulative evidence in support of the same great and blessed fact that it is true of the Lord's people as it is of the stars. He calleth them all by their names.

And I think this is a valid point. Whatever else you want to say, and however far you want to go with the significance of the number, one thing you can say is, and you see this also in the beautiful chiasm and reference back to the very beginning of John's Gospel, there is great specificity in the plan of God. God knows what He is doing.

Every circumstance down to the finest detail is known to God and is ordained of God as a part of His plan and purpose. This is why, as we saw in our Memoryverse review this morning, no temptation has befallen you but such as is common to man, and with all of them, with each of them, God provides a way of escape. Every pressure, every test, every challenge, God knew about it in advance and has ensured that there is an answer, a solution, a coping mechanism, a way of escape.

Escape from what? Escape from failure. It doesn't mean escape from the test, but escape from failing that test of failing the grace of God and falling short. Now, that's how specific God's plan is.

The very hairs on your head are numbered. There is not a sparrow that falls to the ground that God doesn't know about it. So, if you think that the 153 fish is not important in some other way, it is important in this way.

God knew how many fish were going to be in that net. God knew that they wouldn't be able to pull it into the boat. God knew that Peter would be able to pull it ashore.

Jesus knew the disciples would be there. They didn't know He would be there. He knew and He appeared in fulfillment of His promise to the ones who had gone to Galilee in faith and had overcome their fear.

My question is, where are the other four? Four of the disciples aren't there. Were they in town and didn't go fishing when Peter said he would go fishing? I don't know. A final observation in this regard has to do with the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord

Jesus.

You know that Paul summarizes these over in 1 Corinthians 15, when he says we know that He is raised. He was seen first by Peter and of the 12. At one point in 1 Corinthians 15.6, he says he was seen by upwards of 500, all in one place.

Well, people like to make everything line up. You don't want any loose ends. And so they take the listed resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels and try to find those 500.

Well, what are the candidates for this? You have Matthew 28, where Jesus gives a great commission. And this is where a lot of people like to try to find the 500 that Jesus said, going into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature, teaching them to observe all things, baptizing them in the name, and that this must have been given to the 500. Well, keep your place here in John, but go back again to Matthew 28, and we can quickly see that this isn't the occasion that the 500 saw Him.

Because in Matthew 28, verse 16, the 11 disciples went away into Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. So here we have all 11 in Galilee. They're not all on the lake.

They don't all have breakfast with Jesus by the shore. But Matthew tells us all 11 went to Galilee, and they went to the mountain, not to the sea. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him.

But what? Some doubted. Why? Because sight is not sufficient in the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus. And seeing Him was not sufficient evidence.

He doesn't look the same. He doesn't sound the same. That's why some doubt.

Why would they doubt if it was the same old Jesus they had always seen? Some doubted. And this is out of the 11. I think this is why you don't have those four.

I think there's four that doubted. There's four that said, Well, I don't think He's coming. I'm leaving.

I'm doing something else. There are 11 who hear, Jesus came and spoke to them. To whom? To the 11 in the mountain and said, All authority has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples. Who gets the great commission? 11 men. I'm just saying.

It's 11 men. Why didn't Jesus wait until the 500 were assembled and say, Hey, you 500, all of you go into the world. Because this commission is to those who were witnesses.

Jesus tells the 11, You shall be my witnesses. You 11. What is their witness? It's right

here in the pages of this scripture.

These guys are responsible for what we have in this scripture, directly, indirectly. Some of them didn't write books, but their recollections became a part of Luke's gospel, reinforced what Peter and John and the others wrote. They are the witnesses.

You have been with me from the beginning. They understood this in Acts when they tried to elect Matthias. We need somebody that was with Him from the beginning.

Those will be the witnesses. You shall be my witnesses. You go, you preach, you baptize, because you are the point of the spear, you 11.

So the 500 are not here in Matthew 28. Now you say, well, maybe it's when He ascended in Acts 1. So flip forward, that's why I had to keep your finger in John, because you can just go a page or two forward and get to Acts 1. Former account I've made of Theophilus, etc. After he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, this is verse 2, until the day in which he was taken up.

After he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to whom? Who did Jesus give commandments to? Often overlooked verse in Scripture. After he had given commandments to all those who believed in him. After he had given commandments to upwards of 500 in one place.

After he gave commandments to the apostles. It is the apostles. Now they are told, yes, teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

But the commission to do that is given to the 11. To the apostles whom he had chosen. To whom he also presented himself alive after his sufferings by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during 40 days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

There were other appearances besides the three that John notes. Beside the appearance that Matthew puts in 28, he appeared many times. John gives us the first three.

And Luke is going to give us another. Being assembled together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. Now, this is after they've been to Galilee.

He has showed himself during 40 days by many infallible proofs. And sometime after those, say, five weeks of appearances, many of them in Galilee, on the mountaintop, at the lake and so on, they have returned to Jerusalem. They haven't been in Jerusalem the whole time.

People try to say this is a contradiction. It's not. They've been in Galilee.

Now they're back. Is there time in five weeks, five and a half weeks, to get to Galilee and

come back to Jerusalem? Yes. Why would they be back in Jerusalem? What is Pentecost? Assembly feast.

Passover? Assembly feast. Pentecost? Assembly feast. Rosh Hashanah? Assembly feast.

Three assembly feasts in the year. Everybody goes to Jerusalem? They're in Jerusalem. Assembled with them, he said, Don't depart from Jerusalem until you receive the promise of the Father, which you have heard from me, John baptized with water, you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit, not many days hence.

When they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom? He said, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in His own authority. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You shall be witnesses to me, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, until the end of the age.

Now when he had spoken these things, while they watched, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. This is from the Mount of Olives. And while he looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up.

Now this is another place where they like to say there were 500 assembled. And they heard this version of the Great Commission that he gives in 1, 7, and 8. That's where the 500 were. 500 watched him ascend.

Well, here's the thing about that. What do the angels say? I like to think these were the same two angels that were at the tomb. Same guys.

They are the Lord Jesus' honor guard, now that He's in His resurrected and glorified state. And they appear as necessary to communicate if Jesus isn't doing it Himself. What do they say? What's the first thing they say? What are the first words out of the two angels' mouths? Ye 500 people assembled from all corners of... Ye men of Galilee.

Ye men of Galilee. Why would they say that? Why does the Bible include it? Why does God have them say that? The angels messed up. Ye men of Galilee and all the rest of you 493 people.

And the rest of you 488 people, 489 people, depending on how you want to count. Ye men of Galilee. Who is it that is present when the Lord Jesus ascends? Who are the men of Galilee? Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Nathaniel, and probably Thomas, Didymus, the twin.

Those are the men of Galilee. Where are the other four? Maybe they've peeled off. Maybe they are there and just not mentioned.

It says they went to Galilee and went to the mountain. Maybe they didn't like what they

heard. I don't know.

But these are men of Galilee. Everybody that the angels are talking to are men of Galilee. Are the other four disciples possibly from Galilee? Maybe.

Maybe so. But they are men of Galilee. So this is not the 500 either.

So there is another occasion. 500 assembled in one place. Somewhere during the 40 days Jesus appeared to a group.

Now there is another thing that militates against there being 500 on this occasion, even if you ignore the men of Galilee thing. How many people are present 10 days later at the Feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descends? A little Bible trivia question here. How many people are assembled when the Holy Spirit descends like tongues of fire and people start speaking other languages? 120.

If there is 500 here, what happened to the other 380? They saw the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven and they didn't stick around for the promise of the Father? 380 of them, that wasn't enough? The Lord Jesus, two angels? Well, I can't believe that. And so now there is only 120 in a week and a half? 380 of them peel away? I kind of don't think so. I don't think there were 500 on this occasion.

That's just me. I have more faith in the 380. But where were they? Maybe they were in Galilee.

Why did Jesus go to Galilee after His resurrection in the first place? More faith up there than down in Jerusalem. And plus, it's a rest and a comfort and a time of encouragement and instruction for His disciples who are going to start in Jerusalem and Judea and then Samaria with sharing the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. God knows what He's doing.

Our location is known to Him. It is a part of His plan and purpose. When and where and how He manifests Himself to us in His Word through the ministry of His Spirit is an individual thing.

It is for us. The Lord Jesus is interested in your life and in my life. He is aware of all of the details down to the tiniest sparrow, the last fish in the net.

He knows it all. And this ought to encourage us to not be locked in the upper room waiting for the test to disappear, waiting for the fear to subside. Think about what Jesus has said.

Think about what God has spoken to us. Lay hold of it by faith. It tells us what to do.

Eleven guys, certainly six or eight, huddled in the upper room, sharing their fear, pooling, you know. This is where mentoring and discipleship doesn't necessarily help you. Encourage one another in fear.

They're all together, but they're not doing what they're supposed to do. They are united in doing the wrong thing. It is the presence of the Lord Jesus that galvanizes us into right action, productive action, getting where we need to be to do what we are supposed to do.

And if we stop and think about what the Lord has said, we'll know what we need to do. If these men had stopped and thought, they would have never hung around in Jerusalem for over a week. They wouldn't have been huddled in fear.

They would have realized that they were indestructible and immortal for the next several weeks because Jesus said, I will see you in Galilee. Take it to the bank. I will see you in Galilee.

What have I to fear? What can man do unto me? Jesus said, if they kill me, he's going to bring me back. That ought to be interesting. I'll get raised.

Lazarus had a lot to say about his time of death and resuscitation. Jesus says he's going to see me in Galilee. What can they do? Whatever it is, I'm still going to see him in Galilee.

This ought to be fun. Let's try it out. Let's see how it goes.

Are we going to be invisible? Are we going to be transported by angels? Will God grab us like Ezekiel by the hair of the head? How are we going to get there? Let's go find out. Jesus said he's going to see us in Galilee. Can't wait to see him.

Look at all they missed out and the tribulation they endured for over a week for no good reason. Trust God. But to do that, we've got to spend time thinking about what he has said and the presence of the Lord Jesus will be with us.

What does Revelation 3.20 say? Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and we will share a meal. They didn't share a meal in the upper room, did they? Because Jesus didn't want them sticking around.

He said, look, I'll eat a piece of fish and honey to show you I'm alive. But look, the meal is in Galilee. The peace and the encouragement and the instruction and the direction for the future is in Galilee.

Get thee to Galilee. And we need to do this for ourselves. It has to be something that we pursue.

Don't wait for the Lord to surprise us in the upper room. Let's get on the road. It's a great road.

It's a great promise that we have from the Lord Jesus. I will not leave you comfortless. I

will come to you.

And he comes to us through the ministry of the Spirit and the power of God's word. Let's close here in prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word and the wonderful ways, the variety and the diversity of ways that you communicate your word and your truth to us.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will make these things live and motivate us in our souls so that we can fulfill all of your plans and purposes and bear fruit that reflects your glory, prepare ourselves for service and for future fellowship with you in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.