

Weaving the Word

An Astonishing Catch

Part 14 – October 12, 2014

Welcome to where we're learning to distinguish the difference between religion and Good News!

What's the worst thing you ever got caught doing?

What are you most relieved that you never got caught doing?

I've got bad news. You got caught. Just, maybe not by another fish in the net; but, **we've all been lured, hooked, and netted.**



[As the prophet Habakkuk so aptly said] You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet ... – Habakkuk 1:14-15a NIV

Mankind is caught in the enemy's wicked net. We've all been weighed and found wanting. We're each dead in our personal buffet selection of sin. However, we still have hope, because we *haven't been eaten ... yet!*



So, **would you like to be freed or fried?**

Understand now, **every fish will be consumed.** No escaping *that.*

The wicked foe, the monster fish, "leviathan", has an insatiable appetite. And, **God himself is an all-consuming fire.** (Deut 4:24) And, you're just a fish out of water.



The sinners in Zion [a name for Jerusalem that translates to "parched place"] are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" [Thankfully, Isaiah answers us] He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, [Unthankfully, he makes it clear it ain't us!] who rejects gain from extortion [gain at the expense of others] and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, [any payment under the table] who stops his ears against plots of murder [won't even listen to what could wound others] and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil [won't even think about taking a peek] ... – Isaiah 33:14-15 NIV



So what'll it be: baked, broiled, or battered?



There *is* one more option: ***you must consume the body broken for you, and the blood shed for you, by the One who became like a fish of the sea, beginning His journey in the Jordan, and ultimately allowing himself, like Jonah, to be swallowed up by death to bring us life.***

Then, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you *can dwell* quite comfortably in the fiery presence of God's everlasting glory.



It consumes those who refuse His Spirit (the way light consumes darkness) but, **it revives and restores those who receive the Light.**

Today, I'm only giving you one thing to *do*. One take-home point.

But it's a *biggie*; and I'll try to help you.

I want you to revere, respect, appreciate, and adore Jesus *even more* than when you came in.

And then, I want you to **try and hold onto that when you go out.**

And that's not easy. **It requires desire, determination, *and* effort.**

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. [John had fulfilled his mission. God said, "*I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way*" (Mark 1:2); and John did this by bringing the Jewish nation to repentance of their sins] "**The time has come,**" he said. [*What time?* The time John was preparing them for: **the gathering before the burning judgment.** John said, "*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*" (Mat 3:11-12)] "**The kingdom of God is near.** [There's no time to hesitate!] **Repent and believe the good news!**" [You matter to God. He's made a way for you to escape darkness, death, and destruction. It's the gift of life and light to simply be *received*; and then *revered and respected and appreciated and adored more and more day by day*] As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "*Come, follow me,*" Jesus said, "*and I will make you fishers of men.*" – Mark 1:14-17 NIV

One year later (from Passover to Passover), Jesus returns to Peter and Andrew's boat, most likely near Bethsaida.¹

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. ... **Many followed him,** ... When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. ... **and he healed all their sick,** ... [CONTINUED]

¹ John (1:44) calls Bethsaida "the city of Andrew and Peter". Other evidence suggests that they lived in Capernaum. Either way, it makes sense that their fishing business (along with their partners) was likely in Bethsaida.

... One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, [Sea of Galilee] with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, [Peter and John] who were washing their nets. ... Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat [Peter's] ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. ... He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. – Mark 3:7-10; Matthew 12:15b-16; Luke 5:1-3 NIV

Why'd Jesus call for a boat? The multitude swarming the shore. Multiplying. Thousands. Pressing. Pushing. But, **do you think Jesus allowed anything to happen that wasn't part of His plan?** So, **why did Jesus come to the shores of Bethsaida ("The house of fish"), to sit in a fishing boat, to teach the swirling masses? He's fishing.** Look at His lure: "When they heard all he was doing, many people came", "and he healed all their sick". He caught 'em with physical healing, and released 'em with spiritual. It's the first recorded catch-and-release program! And they were "listening to the word of God" which means **He was reading or reciting, and expounding on, scripture.** But, which ones?



Again, **unless Jesus haphazardly performed random displays of power without purpose, it would be scriptures that will be underscored and emphasized with His climactic miraculous object lesson of an astonishing catch.** And, there aren't that many. And, they were well known to Jesus' Jewish listeners.

And, they're mostly warnings about judgment. For instance, **He might've read the wise words of King Solomon.** (c. 966^{BC})

As fish are caught in a cruel net ... so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them. – Ecclesiastes 9:12b NIV

Or, **maybe He read the warning words of Amos,** the prophet who tried to gather God's people before the destruction of Israel. (c. 722^{BC})

The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness: **[and you don't get more certain than God vowing His inmost being!]** "The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks." – Amos 4:2 NIV

But, **I can't imagine Him *not teaching* from the prophet, Habakkuk.**

Look at the nations and watch — and be utterly amazed. **[“Be astonished!” NAS, NRS (Luke will later write, “They were astonished at the catch of fish”)]** For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. **[John will later write, “The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (Jn 1:5)]** O Lord, are you not from everlasting? **[Jesus will later say, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (Rev 22:13)]** My God, my Holy One, we will not die. **[Jesus will later say, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (Jn 11:25)]** O Lord, you have appointed them **[Habakkuk is speaking of “the wicked foe”]** to execute judgment; **[When they execute Jesus] ... [CONTINUED]**

... O Rock, you have ordained them to punish. [Jesus will later say to Pilate, “*You would have no power over me if it were not given from above*” (Jn 19:11)] Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? [Short answer: love and patience. Paul will later write, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23)] Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? [Isaiah had already written, “*Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.*” (Is 53:7)] You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet ... – Habakkuk 1:5, 12-15a NIV

Jesus came to reclaim every fish destined for death – every fish, that is, that would rather be freed than fried. But the sad truth is: some prefer the lure of the hook over life itself.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” [They have no idea they’re living a NT event. Do you?] When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that **their nets began to break.** [They represent the enemy’s stronghold of death and darkness that Jesus came to break to release and restore us back to our Father. When Jesus rose, appeared on shore, and surprised His disciples with another astonishing catch, the net represents His victory: “*but even with so many [fish] the net was not torn.*” (John 21:11) But the nets representing the enemy were breaking bad] So they signaled their partners [James and John] in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.” So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. – Luke 5:4-11 NIV

Why would they leave two boatloads of fish behind? Jesus had bigger fish to fry. And besides, **there was a huge crowd of hungry people who needed to eat.** (This is the miraculous feeding you might’ve missed.) So, **Jesus left the fish to be put in the fire and consumed; the necessary conclusion to His astonishing object lesson.**

When Jesus first appeared after He rose, He was hungry himself.

[So] They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. – Luke 24:42-45 NIV

Jesus came to reclaim every fish destined for death, by dying for us, and breaking its hold over us, so He could release us.

This astonishing gift, release to eternal life, must be revered, respected, appreciated, and adored more and more day by day. And to help you hold onto that as you leave, you’ll be able to consume a bite of salmon that’s on the fire even as we speak.