

<p>1 Bckgrd: After the meal, Jesus focused on Peter</p> <p>2 Do you love me more than these?</p> <p>a. Pointed to disciples</p> <p>b. Pointed to fishing equipment</p> <p>c. Feed my lambs</p> <p>3 Do you love me with God's love?</p>	<p>G. Event 7: The Great Question of a Disciple's Love and Devotion,^{1,2,3,4,5} 21:15-17</p> <p>15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.</p> <p>16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon,</p>	<p>son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.</p> <p>17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.</p>	<p>a. God's love (agapao)</p> <p>b. Peter's love (phileo)</p> <p>c. Feed my sheep</p> <p>4 Do you love me as a loyal brother?</p> <p>a. Lord's love (phileo)</p> <p>b. Peter's love (phileo)</p> <p>c. Feed my sheep</p>
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¹ (21:15-17) **Introduction:** this is a critical passage for the church and its ministers. It has one great lesson: love is the one basic essential for ministry. Without love, ministry counts for nothing in God's eyes. This passage concerns three questions asked by our Lord.

1. Background: after the meal, Jesus focused on Peter (v.15).
2. Do you love me more than these (v.15)?
3. Do you love me with God's love (v.16)?
4. Do you love me as a loyal brother (v.17)?

(Note: this passage is best studied as a whole, comparing each question with the other two questions. Because of this, all three points are studied together and not by separate points. It is also helpful to see notes, Love--Jn.13:33-35; 14:15.)

² (21:15-17) **Ministry:** the meal was finished. Jesus and the disciples were sitting around talking and sharing together after the meal. Remember four things.

- Jesus had already met Peter all alone in a private session to discuss Peter's denial and to make sure he was fully restored (cp. 1 Cor.15:4-5).
- Peter's leadership needed to be reinforced publicly among all the disciples. They all knew about Peter's denial.
- Jesus had to make sure Peter would never deny Him nor fall back from his mission again.
- Jesus needed to teach the disciples the one basic essential for ministry. None of them, not even a charismatic leader such as Peter, could ever minister and bear godly fruit unless he *loved* the flock of God. A man may be the most gifted person in the world, but he is nothing and can do nothing of value *in God's eyes* unless he first loves (cp. 1 Cor.13:1-3). Abilities, talents, gifts, commitments, good deeds, and works just do not qualify a man before God nor make a man acceptable to God. The one great thing--in fact the only thing--that makes a man acceptable and that qualifies him to serve God is *love*.

These are the reasons for what Jesus now did. He turned and focused upon Peter. Note: He called Peter by his full name, Simon Peter, and reminded him that he was the son of Jonas (cp. Jn.1:42). This did two things.

- It attracted everyone's attention, stressing that what was to follow was important--more important than usual.
- It reminded Peter where he had come from. He was of humble beginnings, from a lowly father. All that Peter had become and would become was of God. Peter was *nothing apart from Christ*, and *nothing apart from the mission he was about to receive*.

Thought 1. A man must know that he is nothing apart from Christ. How many persons would have more in life--more purpose, more meaning, more significance--if they would only surrender to Christ? How many have actually been called by Christ and rejected His call; therefore, they have missed out on their purpose in life and on making their contribution to society and to the world?

³ (21:15-17) **Love--Commitment:** there is a difference between the three questions Jesus asked of Peter. Question one asked Peter who he loved the most, the Lord Himself or "these." Just what is meant by "these" is not clear. Jesus could have been pointing to the disciples sitting around. If so, He meant, do you love me more than you love these men or your family? Or, Jesus could have been pointing to the fish, the nets, and the boat. If so, He was asking, do you love me more than your profession and career (cp. Jn.21:3)? Perhaps Scripture is unclear at this point in order to make "these" apply to anything and everything in our lives.

Question two asked Peter if he loved with God's love. This is seen in the Greek word for love. Jesus used one word, but Peter used another. Jesus used the word *agape*, the highest form of love, the love of God Himself. But Peter did not reply, "Yea, Lord, I *agape* you." He said, "Yea, Lord, I *phileo* you." That is, I love you just like a brother; I love you with a brotherly love." *Phileo* means brotherly love, the love between two brothers.

Question three probed the genuineness and loyalty of Peter's love. Here Jesus descended to the human level of love. He used *phileo*. He simply asked Peter, "Peter, do you really love, *phileo* me--even as a brother?" And questioning the

loyalty of his love grieved Peter. But Jesus assured Peter that his love would one day reach the ultimate height (Jn.21:18). Peter would be called upon to demonstrate *agape* love, the sacrificial love of God. Peter would be called upon to die for Christ, to give his life for preaching the love of God to those who do not care for it and who react violently against it.

What Jesus was doing was preparing His disciples for a new kind of love that was yet to come. Up to the time of Christ's death and ascension, the greatest love known to man was *phileo* love, the willingness of a man to die for a friend. But in Christ, God was showing the world a new kind of love--*agape* love. *Agape* love is a love so new that a new meaning had to be given to the Greek word "*agape*." *Agape* became the love that was willing to give and die even for an enemy. The early Christian leaders recognized this new dimension of love, so they lifted the meaning of *agape* love up to God's love for the world. *Agape* love is the highest level of love possible; it is the love of God: "God [who] so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16).

Agape love is Christ dying...

- for people who have no strength (Ro.5:6).
- for the ungodly (Ro.5:6).
- for sinners (Ro.5:8).
- for the enemies of God (Ro.5:10).

Peter and the disciples did not yet understand this. They could not because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, and *agape* love is shed abroad in the heart only by the Holy Spirit (Ro.5:5). It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:22).

⁴ (21:15-17) **Ministry--Church:** three times Peter was commissioned to feed and tend the flock of God. If Peter really loved the Lord, then he was commissioned to be a shepherd of the flock of God. Note three things.

1. Scripture identifies the lambs and sheep as the flock of God, that is, as the church of God. Jesus was talking about feeding His church, His disciples within the church.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Note: in this verse (Acts 20:28) the charge is to guard oneself as well as the flock of God. This is similar to what Jesus was saying to Peter: if you love me, guard yourself and be faithful; feed my lambs and sheep, my church.

2. The flock of God is made up of both lambs (*arnia*, v.15) and sheep (*probatia*, v.16-17).
 - Lambs: children, young converts, the handicapped or special cases, believers who need special attention.
 - Sheep: mature believers, believers who have walked and grown in the Lord for a long time. (See note, pt.5--Mt.25:31-33 for more discussion.)
3. The ministry to the flock or church is twofold.
 - a. The first ministry is to feed (*boske*, v.15, 17).
 - To give food, teaching both the milk and meat of the Word.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pt.2:2-3).

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles [Word] of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of us have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb.5:12-14).
 - To guide into the study of the Word--showing oneself approved unto God.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim.2:15).

Note that the word used for feeding (*boske*) is the word used for both the lambs (v.15) and the sheep (v.17). Both the lambs and sheep are to be fed on the same Word and fed in the same way.

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jer.15:16).

"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

"Know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Dt.8:3; cp. Mt.4:4).

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Ps.119:103).
 - b. The second ministry is to shepherd (*poimaine*, v.16). Shepherding involves all the works of the ministry.

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pt.5:2-3).

(See note--Jn.10:2-3 for the work of a shepherd. See note--Mk.6:34.)

⁵ (21:15-17) **Love:** the difference between *agape* love and *phileo* love is as follows.

Phileo love is the love of tender affection, of warm and deep feelings within the heart. It is the deep and precious love of those near and dear to one's heart. It is brotherly love, a love between family members, a love that would die for its brother.

Agape love is the love of the mind, of the reason, and of the will. It is a love that is born of choice; one simply chooses to love regardless of feelings. A person may insult, injure, or humiliate; but *agape love* chooses to seek only the highest good for that person. It is sacrificial love, a love that is willing to die even for its enemies.

Agape love means...

- sacrificial giving.
- free acceptance (one freely accepts without any expectation of return).
- cherished attachment.
- unselfish devotion.
- personal commitment.
- genuine concern.
- strong loyalty.
- precious tenderness.

Agape love was so new and so unusual, it can be said that after Christ a new word for love had to be created. Jesus' primary interest with Peter was, of course, that he possess *agape love*: the love that comes from reason and will, that controls the corruptible lusts and wandering thoughts of life, that puts a willingness within a man to serve and to die for all men--even for a person's enemies. Even the enemies of God must hear the gospel and have an opportunity for salvation. However, the fact that Jesus also used *phileo love* with Peter shows that God wants the love of man's warm instinctive feelings as well.

Agape love means at least eight things.

1. *Agape love* is not only a love of emotions. It is a matter of the mind as well as of the heart, of the will as well as of the emotions.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16).

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro.5:6-8).

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn.4:9-10).

2. *Agape love* is God's love--His very nature. It is the love that God extended toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Ro.5:8, 10).

"Beloved, let us love one other: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins...And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 Jn.4:7-10, 16).

3. *Agape love* is a seed that can be planted in the heart only by Christ. It is a fruit of the Spirit of God.

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Ro.5:5).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal.5:22).

4. *Agape love* is the great love that God holds for His own dear Son.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Jn.15:10).

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn.17:26).

5. *Agape love* was perfectly expressed when God gave up His own Son to die for man.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor.5:14).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" (Eph.2:4).

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph.3:19).

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph.5:2).

6. *Agape love* is the love which holds believers together. For three years Jesus Himself had held the apostles together. Now that He was about to leave them, what was going to keep them together and keep them at the task? One thing: the new commandment--*agape love*. *Agape love* is the love believers are to have for one another.

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn.13:33-35).

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn.3:17-18).

7. *Agape love* is the love which believers are to have for all men.
 - "Let all your things be done with charity [love]" (1 Cor.16:14).
 - "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you" (1 Th.3:12).
 - "And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Pt.1:7).
- a. *Agape love* seeks the welfare of all.
 - "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Ro.15:2).
- b. *Agape love* works no ill to its neighbor.
 - "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Ro.13:8-10).
- c. *Agape love* seeks opportunities to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith.
 - "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal.6:10).
 - "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness" (Col.3:12-14; cp. 1 Cor.13:1f).
8. *Agape love* is proven by obedience to Christ. Doing as oneself wishes instead of doing as God wills shows that one does not have *agape love*.
 - "If ye love me, keep my commandments....He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him....Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Jn.14:15, 21, 23).
 - "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Jn.15:10).
 - "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 Jn.2:5).
 - "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 Jn.5:3).
 - "And this is love, that we walk after his commandment. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it" (2 Jn.6).