

AMANA TRUST BIBLE STUDIES

Lessons from the Gospel of John (23):

Life in Resurrection (2)—Stirring up the Disciples' Love toward Him and Charging Them with Lamb-feeding and Sheep-shepherding

Bible reading

You may find it helpful to also read the entire case found in John 21:1-25.

John 21:15-17

15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.

16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

Introduction

By the end of John chapter 20, everything is wonderful and complete—the Lord has come back as the Spirit to be everything to the disciples, and the gospel seems to have reached its conclusion. Yet the Holy Spirit continues to write another chapter. In chapter 21 we realise that the Lord is working to build up the church by shepherding His flock; however, the disciples were backsliding from the Lord's call to their old occupation. The Lord came to where they were, made breakfast for them, trained them to trust in Him for their living, restored their love toward Him, and charged them with the shepherding of His church.

Bible study reading

Please prayerfully read through the following portions of ministry related to this lesson.

After restoring Peter's love toward Him, the Lord Jesus charged him, saying, "Feed My lambs," "Shepherd My sheep," and "Feed My sheep." The first twenty chapters of the Gospel of John stress the matter of believing in the Son that we may have life (3:15). But in this chapter it is not a matter of believing but of loving. The fruit-bearing in chapter fifteen is the outflow of the riches of the inner life. Here the lamb-feeding is the nourishing with the riches of the inner life. In order to feed others we need to enjoy the riches of the Lord's divine life. This requires that we love Him. To believe in the Lord is to receive Him, and to love the Lord is to enjoy Him. The Lord came as life and as the life supply to us. We need to have faith in Him and love toward Him. According to the Gospel of John, these are the two requirements for participating in the Lord.

Lamb-feeding is by the nourishing with the riches of the inner life, and sheep-shepherding is for the building of the church. Shepherding is for the "flock" (10:14, 16), which is the church (Acts 20:28). Therefore, it is related to God's building (Matt. 16:18). Later, in his first Epistle, Peter indicated this by saying that growth, by feeding on the pure milk of the Word, is for the building of God's

house (1 Pet. 2:2-5) and by charging the elders to shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1-4). The growth by nourishing is for the building. The Lord is still working with His disciples in this way. Today, by lamb-feeding and sheep-shepherding, the Lord is working with us for the building of the church.

By considering three chapters, John 10, and 1 Peter 2 and 5, we shall see that feeding the lambs and shepherding the sheep are for the building up of the church. According to John 10, the Lord laid down His soulful life that His sheep might have His divine life and be brought together as one flock. To bring all His sheep together as one is truly the building. In 1 Peter 2, Peter says that we, as newborn babes, must be fed with the pure milk of the Word that we might grow up to be built up together as a spiritual house. Finally, in 1 Peter 5, Peter, as one of the elders, charges the elders to care for the sheep by feeding and shepherding them. Feeding the sheep is different from shepherding them. In 21:15 the Lord said, "Feed My lambs"; in 21:16, He said, "Shepherd My sheep"; and in 21:17, He said, "Feed My sheep." To shepherd means to take care of the sheep, and to feed means to supply food to the sheep. While we are serving the Lord today, we must not only care for His sheep, but also feed them with spiritual food. It is not sufficient simply to care for and to look after the brothers and sisters; we must also feed them. In verse 15 the Lord said, "Feed My lambs," and in verse 17 He said, "Feed My sheep." By this we see that both the young believers and the more matured believers need the feeding. If the Lord has committed to us the burden of His flock, we must be sure to do two things—to feed them and to care for them. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 49, section 2)

Going deeper

Please read or listen to these materials for an in-depth study of this lesson.

Further reading:

[*Life-study of John*, msg. 49](#)

Radio broadcast link:

Broadcast 51, [*Life in Resurrection \(4\)*](#)

(Click the link above and select Broadcast 51.)

Footnotes from Recovery Version of the New Testament:

John 21:15, footnotes 1 and 4

John 21:16, footnote 1

Questions for personal or corporate study:

References in brackets indicate readings or broadcasts that may be helpful in answering the questions.

- According to the Gospel of John, what are the two requirements for participating in the Lord so that we can feed others with the riches of the Lord's divine life?
- Explain how John 10 and 1 Peter 2 and 5 show us that feeding the lambs and shepherding the sheep are for the building up of the church.

Next week

Bearing Fruit by the Overflow of the Inner Life

We receive the riches of the Lord's divine life by believing in Him, and we enjoy these riches by loving Him. Hence, through faith in Him and love toward Him, we are filled with riches that enable us to nourish the Lord's lambs with the riches of the inner life. This lamb-feeding and sheep-shepherding is for the building up of the church. Having completed the final chapter of John, we will use the next two weeks to see an overview of the entire book, beginning next week with the focus of the entire Bible—the organism of the Triune God.

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. *Life-study of John*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985. www.ministrybooks.org

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Charity number 1093401, Company number 4366897
Bower House, Orange Tree Hill, Romford, Essex, RM4 1PB