

John 21:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Analysis

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three (έκατὸν πεντήκοντα τριῶν/hekaton pentēkonta triōn)—The precise number 153 has fascinated interpreters for centuries. Some note that ancient zoology (Hieronymus) claimed 153 species of fish existed, suggesting the gospel's universal scope—every nation will be gathered. Others observe mathematical properties: 153 is the sum of $1+2+3\dots+17$ (triangular number), or $1^3+2^3+3^3+4^3+5^3$. While the symbolism remains debated, the specificity itself matters—this was a real, countable, historical catch, not legend or myth.

More significant is the detail: **for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken** (οὐκ ἐσχίσθη τὸ δίκτυον/ouk eschisthē to diktyon). In Luke 5:6, the initial call resulted in nets breaking (διερρήσσετο/dierrēsseto) from the catch. Now, at the conclusion of Jesus' earthly ministry, the net holds despite being full of 'great fishes' (μεγάλων/megalōn). This pictures the church: empowered by resurrection, it will hold together despite the multitude and diversity of those gathered. Church unity is resurrection power, not human management.

Historical Context

Peter's leadership role is emphasized—he alone draws the net to land. This foreshadows his prominence in Acts, where he leads the church in gathering the

first harvest at Pentecost (Acts 2). The Sea of Galilee contained abundant fish species, and a catch of 153 large fish would represent extraordinary professional success, worth substantial money. That they left this catch to follow Jesus (again) demonstrates the priority of Christ over earthly gain.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the unbroken net, contrasted with the broken nets in Luke 5, illustrate the difference between pre-resurrection and post-resurrection church unity and strength?
2. What does the specific number 153—real, countable, historical—teach about the Gospel accounts as actual history rather than symbolic mythology?
3. How does Peter's action of drawing the catch to Jesus (not keeping it for himself) model pastoral leadership that presents converts to Christ rather than building personal kingdoms?

Interlinear Text

ἀνέβη Σίμων Πέτρος καὶ εἴλκυσεν τὸ δίκτυον ἐπὶ τῆς
went up Simon Peter and drew G3588 the net to G3588
G305 G4613 G4074 G2532 G1670 G1350 G1909

γῆς, μεστὸν ἰχθύων μεγάλων ἑκατὸν πεντήκοντα
land full fishes of great an hundred and fifty
G1093 G3324 G2486 G3173 G1540 G4004

τριῶν· καὶ τοσούτων ὅντων οὐκ ἐσχίσθη τὸ
and three and for all there were so many yet was not broken G3588
G5140 G2532 G5118 G5607 G3756 G4977

δίκτυον

the net
G1350

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