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DO YOU LOVE ME

“So when they had finished 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, ‘Tend My lambs.’ 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.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because 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, ‘Tend My sheep,’” (Jn. 21:15-17). This is the first recorded

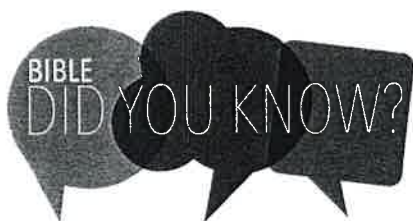
conversation we have between Peter and Jesus after Peter denied that he had anything to do with His Lord. On the surface the dialogue between them appears to be the same question and answer simply repeated three times, yet when examined a bit deeper reveals a touching revelation into the honest humbled state of one broken by humiliating failure and Jesus’ gentle merciful response to it. At first, Jesus asks Peter if he is willing to reaffirm the bold assessment of loyal devotion he had proclaimed earlier in the upper room before Jesus’ arrest when he insisted his love for Jesus had risen to the highest level possible even surpassing that of any other disciple (Mk. 14:29-31; LK.

22:33). “*Do you love Me more than these?*” While Peter’s response, “*Yes, Lord; You know that I love You,*” sounds like he hasn’t changed a single bit from the statements he professed several days earlier, a study of the text in the original Greek language reveals Peter is responding in a humbled state, admitting he stubbornly and proudly overshot his assessed level of commitment before when he refused to accept the Lord’s analysis that Peter would be sifted like wheat and desert Him. The Greek shows when Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him (“agapao” – highest form of spiritual devotion), Peter responds, that yes, he loves Him (“phileo” – friendly affection, not nearly as strong as Jesus’ use of “agapao”). Peter has now accepted the fact that the Lord was right all along when He contradicted Peter’s bold declaration of the ultimate level of sacrificial loyalty when He predicted Peter would deny Him, as noted in Peter’s inclusion and emphasis, “*You know,*” in his response (as if to say, “You know I don’t have the type of

devotion I formerly foolishly bragged about. You knew it before I did”). Seeing Peter’s humility and acceptance of the truth revealed from his failure and subsequent reluctance to proclaim the highest form of loyal devotion, Jesus shaves a bit off the original question, “*...more than these...*”, leaving that part off the second time around, yet continuing to question if Peter has deep loyal devotion to Him. “*Do you love Me?*” (again, using the highest form of love and devotion “agapao”). Peter’s response is exactly the same as the first, revealing he not only acknowledges how unrealistic it was to imply he was any more devoted than any of the other disciples, but that he is now humbled to the point of acknowledging he is not even at the level of commitment to declare an immovable spiritual devotion to Jesus, but that he has genuine dear affections for Him as a friend. “*Yes, Lord...I love (“phileo”) You,*”. How grieved Peter obviously was, then, when Jesus brings His question of Peter’s commitment down to

the level Peter is now comfortable ascribing to with the third question, “*Do you love (“phileo”) Me?*”. Peter has continually been affirming his humble admission that it was inconceivable to make such an intense claim of devoted loyalty when there was no evidence to back it up, but rather consistent observable evidence throughout his life to refute it. How could he make such bold statements when he wasn’t even able to walk all the way to Jesus on the water, when he wasn’t willing to accept everything Jesus taught about his death and resurrection, when he felt compelled to remind Jesus how pointless it would be to obey His command to let down his net for a catch, when he couldn’t make the sacrifice of warding off sleep for an hour to watch and pray with Jesus, etc, etc, etc... Peter is now confident and assured to claim he at least has a genuine dear friendly affection for Jesus because, as he points out, Jesus knows this. Peter’s second use of the word know in his third response means an acquired knowledge that is learned.

While Peter admits how ridiculous it was to claim superior devotion to Jesus when there wasn’t a shred of evidence in his life that could back it up, he is confident to claim he has a dear affection for Jesus because Jesus has continually seen this. And graciously, the Lord was willing to accept this level of commitment, knowing there was still more learning and growing to do, as Jesus lovingly replied, “*Tend My sheep,*”. – Daniel Ruegg



***“I will bless the LORD
at all times; His praise
shall continually be in
my mouth. My soul will
make its boast in the
Lord; the humble will
hear it and rejoice.”
Ps. 34:1-2***

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



Church at Laodicea

Turkish archaeologist Celal Şimşek discovered sacred items used in Christian worship while excavating a house in Laodicea. The peristyle house—built around a central garden or courtyard—was located next to a theater and was likely owned by wealthy people. The apostle Paul sent an epistle to the church at Laodicea, which is mentioned in Colossians but appears to have been lost. The church is also mentioned in Revelation, when Jesus condemns the Christians for saying, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing,” when actually they are “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). Şimşek has not detailed the religious items he unearthed, but concluded the house with a church will add to scholars’ understanding of “how Christianity spread in Laodicea since the middle of the first century.” A 20-room peristylum with a church inside has been unearthed during the ongoing excavation and restoration works in the ancient city of Laodicea, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage Temporary List. Excavation and restoration work in Laodicea, which dates back to 5,500 B.C. in the western province of Denizli, continues under the direction of Professor Celal Şimşek. In Laodicea, the largest ancient city in Anatolia after Ephesus, excavations have been ongoing for a year. So far, a church, theater and two streets called Syria and Stadum with their columns have been revived. Besides, many important structures such as the 1,750-year-old travertine blocks with frescoes, which were destroyed in the earthquake that occurred in 494 AD, a three-meter-long statue of the 1,906-year-old Roman Emperor Marcus Ulpius Nerva Trajan and sacred agora have also been discovered. Three graffiti engraved on a marble block have also been found.

