

DO YOU LOVE ME?



This question automatically brings Peter to mind, for it was to him that this question was directed after the ordeal our Lord YAHSHUA had to go through. Peter became part of it when he fell into the temptation of denying his Savior in time when He needed him most. Peter, as a fisherman, was strong and gruff, shabbily dressed, with vulgar language; He was born in the year 1 B.C in the city of Bethsaida and died in 67 A.D. He was one of the first disciples of Christ led by his brother, Andrew. Simon was his original name, but YAHSHUA changed to Petra or Rock.

Peter's first experience with the Lord was on one of his fishing experiences. He had caught nothing that night, and frustrated he responded to YAHSHUA when He told him to lower his nets into the

deep, Master, we toiled all night and caught nothing, but on the ground of Your word I will lower the nets (Luke 5:5). Peter had no idea that by submitting to the Lord's command, he would be so blessed. When he saw the result, he then realized that before him stood not an ordinary man. And falling down at His knees he said, **Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.** After they had run their boats on the shore, he, James and John left everything to follow YAHSHUA as His disciples (Luke 5).

Peter was one of the three disciples who witnessed YAHSHUA'S transfiguration at mount Hermon; he also experienced the miracle of walking on water during a storm, which happened when they were alone on the boat after the multiplication of fish and loaves of bread when YAHSHUA sent them ahead of Him. When he saw the Lord walking on the water, coming toward them, he said, "If it is you Lord, command me to come to you on the water," but failing to believe, he started to drown. He cried to the Lord, Lord, save me! YAHSHUA lifted Peter from the water, saying, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? (Matt. 14:31) Peter also witnessed the anguish of the Lord at the Garden of Gethsemane, but could not pray for and with Him. Three times he was warned to "watch and pray." But he failed and three times he fell into the temptation of denying the Lord.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter rightly answered YAHSHUA'S question, Who do you say I am? But the same Peter went against God's plan of salvation when he rebuked the Lord at His announcement of His death. The Lord YAHSHUA vehemently rejected Peter's advice by saying, Get behind Me Satan! Peter, in his plan did not want his Lord to die. Perhaps he thought that He was going to establish the kingdom at that time. He fought the arrest of YAHSHUA by cutting the ear of the high priest, who came to arrest Him. But when the time had come for him to show his love for his Master, he could not do it; he run away instead, because Peter did not sincerely love the Lord. He walked with the Lord

YAHSHUA three years, witnessing the miracles He performed, but Peter's heart was hard.

The first warn Peter received from the Lord was direct with emphasis, calling his attention to heed His words: He said, Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked excessively that you be given up to him, that he might sift you like grain, but I have prayed especially for you, that your faith may not fail; and when you yourself have turned again, strengthen and establish your brethren. Not taking to heart the words he had just heard, Peter answered, Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death, But YAHSHUA affirmed by telling him, I tell you, Peter, before the cock shall crow this day, you will three times deny that you know me (Luke 22:31-34). He was inconsistent in his words and behavior. He said one thing and did the opposite even when warned by the Lord. The Lord gave him an opportunity to change his ways, but he was deaf to it and proceeded without considering the words of YAHSHUA.

Peter was physically, emotionally strong, but spiritually weak. His heart was not yet totally with the Lord, neither had his love matured for Him. When things became hard, he ran away leaving the Lord alone in His suffering, although he fought the servant of the high priest who had come to arrest YAHSHUA, by cutting his ear off. He showed outward strength, but inside the true Peter, he was a coward. When confronted by a nobody, he fiercely denied to have known the Lord, even bringing a curse on himself. Where was the Peter who had said, "I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death?" Luke records the event when Peter had denied the Lord the third time in a way that shows his repentance in brokenness of spirit. When that happened instantly, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter recalled the Lord's words, how he had told him, Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times and he went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:60-62).

The resurrection morning arrived, the Lord YAHSHUA no longer was in the tomb. The disciples however, did not believe. While waiting for the Lord in Galilee as they were told, Peter decided to back to his old job. He said to the other disciples, I am going fishing! They all said to him, and we are coming with you! So they went out and got into the boat, and throughout that night they caught nothing (John 21:3). They had lost focus of the reason why they were there and that night they found themselves with empty nets. Then the Lord YAHSHUA appeared to them in the dawn of the day and commanded them to throw the net to the right side, and as before, they caught lots of fish, but they did not recognize Him until later. **Morning was already breaking when YAHSHUA came to the beach and stood there. However, the disciples did not know that it was YAHSHUA. When they got out on the land, they saw a fire of coals there and fish lying on it, and bread. YAHSHUA said to them, Bring some of the fish which you have just caught. YAHSHUA said to them, Come and have breakfast** (John 21:4,9-10,12a). That was the best breakfast they had ever had, I think. That experience presented the opportunity for YAHSHUA to reinstate Peter. For he had backslidden from the Lord when he denied Him. Before He ascended to heaven, YAHSHUA was going to reinstate Peter and reinforce His call to him to be a fisher of men. He did so by asking this very important question, not only one time, but three times:

Peter, do you love me more than these? (boats, fish career and things). This question YAHSHUA directed to Peter was emphatic on its meaning of the word love. He used the word agape for love the first two times, meaning, "with reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion, as one loves the Father" while Peter answered Him with the word phileo, "yes, Lord, You know that I love You with deep instinctive personal affection for You as for a close friend." The love expressed in the word agape is the highest love that implies total commitment in the surrendering of one's self to the taking up of the cross to love YAHSHUA; Peter, however, was

not ready to commit himself to the Lord; to love Him with all his heart and mind. Reason why he could not answer the question, using the word agape. But when the Lord asked him the third time, changing the word to phileo, Peter was grieved, because his life could not support the commitment the word agape required. He remembered his past failures and before his Lord, he confessed so. In all three times that the Lord challenged Peter, He charged him to **feed**, to **shepherd** and to **tend** His sheep, a fisher of men, indeed. The Lord had come to save those who were lost; Peter was to take care of them, compelled by love to the Lord.

Peter is the picture of the end time church – the lukewarm church. The Laodicea Church, which considers itself to be rich and prosperous, when it is wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked in the sight of the Lord (Rev. 3:17). Even though Peter confessed to love the Lord with phileo love, his life proved otherwise. He lived to love the Lord with the love that required devotion and total commitment to the point of death as a martyr.

We live in a society where most of the love offered the Lord is phileo love. We love the Lord while we are in church, singing and communing with others. We feel good and loved by all in that circle, but when we leave, we leave all that behind. We have no time to serve the Lord, by assisting others in need. Our lives are solely involved in self, while the world perish in their sins.

YAHSHUA said, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me (Matt. 16: 23,24). Willing to die in order to follow YAHSHUA is the true love we can show Him. It is the love that springs forth from the soul. The apostle John said, He who does not love God has not become acquainted with God, for God is love (I John 4:8). Only in absolute surrender, can we know and love Him. Do you love Him? If so, how much and to what extent?