

THE EIGHTH SIGN OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

John 21:4-11

Morning was already breaking when Jesus came to the beach and stood there. However, the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So He said to them, Boys, you do not have any meat, do you? They answered Him, no! And He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find [some]. So they cast the net and now they were not able to haul it in for such a big catch. So Peter went board and hauled the net to land, full of large fish, 153 of them; and [though] there were so many of them, the net was not torn.

This eighth sign is it a sign or a symbol, or what does it prefigure? In a nut shell, it forms a Divine prefiguration of the Christian church, from Pentecost, A.D. 33, to our Lord's return at the end of the age, after the last member has been "caught" in the Gospel net and the Church has been brought to fullness- a fact expressed symbolically by the number of fishes in the net, namely 153. There is a glorious significance attaching to the number 153. It represents typically the number of the elect who form the Church, which is the body and bride of Christ, when "the fullness of of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25). It should be a matter of solemn interest to all Christians that God should concern Himself to insert in the account of this typical fishing expedition a number with a mystical significance such as 153.

The number 153 is composed of 7 plus 10, multiplied by 9. The number "seven" in the Bible denotes what is spiritually perfect. The number "ten" denotes what is numerically perfect. So, "seven" and "ten" together express in this case a body of people whom God views as being spiritually and numerically perfect. The number "nine" in the Bible signifies finality, being the last of the digits. So in reality when God sees the Church at the time of our Lord's return, it will be stamped with the number 153 which signifies that as a body, she has reached finality, being spiritually perfect and numerically complete.

The fact that the net did not break shows that every member of Christ's body, the Church, will be found in his or her place when our Lord appears to raise "the dead" and to translate those "who are alive and remain" to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:13-18). It is also a wonderful fact that the numerical value of the Greek word both for "fishes" and "the net" is 1224 which is exactly 8 times 153. As "8" is the number of resurrection, its combination with "153" indicates that when complete the Church will have a glorious resurrection.

From the book *The Restored Vision* by A.E. Ware.