

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY AND THREE FISHES



John 21:11

JESUS

Mt. 4:18, 19

CHRIST

Mt. 1:21

GOD

John 1:1

SON

John 3:16

SAVIOUR

Luke 2:11

"... and it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." Acts 27:44b

Origin of the "Christian" Fish Symbol



Some of the most famous Christian symbols are the cross and the fish.

It has been suggested that when threatened by Romans in the first centuries after Christ, Christians used **the fish** to mark meeting places and tombs, or to distinguish friends from foes.

According to one ancient story, when a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company.



Greeks, Romans, and many other pagans used the fish symbol before Christians. Hence the fish, unlike, say, the cross, attracted little suspicion, making it a perfect secret symbol for persecuted believers. So the early Christians made practical use of this symbol for practical convenience.

In our days of bumper-stickers and business-cards it is used as a way to be recognised by strangers.

WHAT DOES IXOYE MEAN?

- Iesous (Iasoos) is JESUS.
- Xristos (Christos) is CHRIST.
- Theou (Theou) is GOD.
- Yios (Huios) is SON.
- Sotare (Sotare) is SAVIOR.

One of the most intriguing mentions of “fishes” is in John’s gospel 21:11.

Those who know of the inspiration of the precious Word of God have wondered about the meaning of the 153 fishes since the earliest of times. All have felt there must be something deeply significant in this number, from the solemn way in which it is introduced in **John 21:11**,—

“Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty and three.”

The apostle Peter is involved in the two miraculous draughts of fishes, one at the beginning (Luke 5) where the net broke and the other at the end of Christ’s ministry, after His resurrection, (**John 21**) where the net did not break.

It may be that in this indivisible number there is an indication of a definite pre-ordained number of saved ones out of the nations during the Millennium. They are known only to God) down even to the last one.

It is a beautiful illustration and confirmation of our Lord’s words, recorded in the same John’s Gospel:

“of all that He (the Father) hath given Me I should lose nothing” (John 6:39) and

“those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost ” (John 17:12).

The special significance of this number has been studied and estimated using a variety of modes.

1. Starting with the fact that 17 is the *sum* of 10 and 7.

Simply *multiply* 17 by 3 and again by 3 (*i.e.*, 17×3^2) one arrives at 153.

2. Or take the sum of all the digits up to and including 17 as amounting to exactly 153.

If you add 2 to 1, you have 3; if to these you add 3 and 4, the whole number makes 10; and then if you add all the numbers that follow up to 17, the whole amounts to the aforesaid number the total is [153]. That is, if to 10, which you had reached by adding all together from 1 to 4, you add 5, you have 15; to these add 6, and the result is 21; then add 7, and you have 28; to this add 8, and 9, and 10, and you get 55; to this add 11, and 12, and 13, and you have 91; and to this again add 14, and 15, and 16, and it comes to 136; and then add to this the remaining number, namely 17, and it will make up the number of 153 fishes."

3. The same result can be reached in a different manner using two numbers.

Here we employ both multiplication and addition. First take the square of 12 (signifying perfection in administration), and then *add* the square of 3 (the number of the Godhead and complete testimony)

$$12^2 + 3^2 = 153, \text{ or } (12 \times 12) + (3 \times 3).$$

4. Another mode for reaching 153 is: $153 = 9 \times 17$.

Here we possibly see that all judgment (9) has been exhausted for the people of God (Gentile nations) (17) by their Surety – our Lord Jesus Christ.

All, however, agree in the great and blessed fact that:

"Salvation is of the Lord,"

Divine alike in its source, its agency, and its results.

The same Divine character is stamped upon this miracle and its lessons by the number of disciples who were present when it was wrought. There were *seven*. And the seven is divided into 3 and 4 as usual - 3 being named, and 4 unnamed.

The one lesson that remains is true, namely, that the whole number of the redeemed are saved by the power of the Triune God according to His sovereign grace.

**Jesus my Shepherd is:
'Twas He that loved my soul,
'Twas He that washed me in His blood,
'Twas He that made me whole:
'Twas He that found the lost,
That found the wandering sheep;
'Twas He that brought me to the flock:
'Tis He that still doth keep.**

Little Flock appendix 73 stanza 3

SEVENTEEN

stands out as a very significant number in Scripture. It is not a multiple of any number, and therefore has no factors.

Hence it is called one of the *prime* or *indivisible numbers*. What is more it is the *seventh* in the list of prime numbers.

The series runs 1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17 etc.

Thirteen is also an important prime number (the sixth) and thus it partakes of the meaning of the number 6. It is really an intensification of the number 6.

Similarly the number 17 partakes of the signification of the numbers 7 & 10 and **intensifies** them.

7 = spiritual perfection

10 = ordinal perfection

17 = the perfection of spiritual order

An example in the precious Word of God of the Holy Spirit's use of the number 17 is seen in Rom. 8:35-39.

Here we have a series of 7 followed by a series of 10.

**“Who shall separate us from
the love of Christ?”**

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. Tribulation | 5. Nakedness |
| 2. Distress | 6. Peril |
| 3. Persecution | 7. Sword |
| 4. Famine | |

These all are tangible and severe life stressors but -

“if God is for us, who can be against us?”

Then we have a list of intangible things:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 8. Death | 13. Things present |
| 9. Life | 14. Things to come |
| 10. Angels | 15. Height |
| 11. Principalities | 16. Depth |
| 12. Powers | 17. Any other creature |

“... shall be able to separate us from

the love of God,

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

