

John 21:1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*.

John 21:2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

John 21:3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

John 21:4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

The wording tells us that John is continuing his narrative in a chronological order. The next time Jesus appears to his disciples was by the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel of Cana, the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two other disciples were there. Peter decided he was going out to fish, so the others decided to go with him. They caught nothing that night. Early in the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize Him. (I would imagine it was because of the distance this time.)

John 21:5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

John 21:6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

He called out and asked them if they had caught any fish. They answered—No. So He told them to throw their net on the right side of the boat, and they would find some. I'm not sure what is more amazing to me—that they found the fish or that they actually listened to the advice—advice that was not logical to say the least—and cast their net on the other side of the boat. I guess after seeing so many miraculous happenings in their three years with the Lord, they had learned to expect the unexpected. Anyway, the net was so full this time that they couldn't pull it into the boat.

The fact that they obeyed tells me that they must have at least thought it was Jesus. I believe it was again His voice that was familiar.

John 21:7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

John 21:8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

“Therefore” = certainly, truly

When they saw the haul of fish, John knew it was the Lord and told Peter. (The word for *naked* means “nude.” I can't help but wonder why Peter would be fishing in the nude with his friends?) Peter immediately put on his outer garment and jumped in the water; they were about 100 yards from shore. The

rest of the guys in the boat towed the net to shore. (Living with Peter must have been quite a challenge.)

John 21:9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

John 21:10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

John 21:11 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.

When they all got to shore, they saw a fire of burning coals with fish on it and some bread; Jesus had prepared a meal for them. Then Jesus told them to bring up the fish from their catch. Peter climbed in and pulled the net to shore; it had 153 large fish in it and the net was not torn. Is the number 153 significant? I haven't a clue.

John 21:12 Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

John 21:13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

John 21:14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

Jesus told them to come eat breakfast. None of them asked who He was; they knew it was the Lord. (John keeps making this point that Jesus is recognizable in His glorified body—but not immediately recognizable. What stands out to me is that He is most recognized by His voice—remember, “*My sheep hear my voice...*”). Jesus served them. (Another reminder by example of what His expectations were for each of them. Teaching by example is by far the most powerful way to teach.) Then we are reminded that this is the third time Jesus had appeared to His disciples after the resurrection.

John 21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

John 21:16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

After they had eaten, Jesus speaks to Peter. He asks Peter three times if he loves Him. Peter answers, “Yes, you know I love you,” each time. The first time Jesus responds to Peter by telling him to feed His lambs. The second time He tells Peter to feed His sheep. (The use of *lambs* and *sheep* seem to indicate ministering to people of different levels of spiritual maturity.) Peter was grieved (distressed, sorrowful) when Jesus asked him again the third time. Why? Because Jesus had

changed the word for love in his question to match the word for love in Peter's answers. Jesus had been questioning him with "agapao," unconditional love, and Peter had been answering with "phileo," the fondness and affection of a friend. The third time Jesus lowered the level of expectation in the question to match the level of Peter's answer. When Peter answered Jesus this time, he emphasized that he knew Jesus knew all things; Jesus knew that Peter loved him. I personally don't think Peter felt that Jesus would have believed him even if he had tried to express the higher level of love. He was still too painfully aware of his actions regarding denying the Savior three times. He couldn't bear the thought of making that kind of mistake again. He had boldly asserted that he would never deny Jesus, and had immediately gone out and done just that—even after Jesus had warned him that he would. Then Jesus tells Peter again to feed His sheep.

Again, Peter knew whom Jesus meant by His sheep. That is probably why the parable of the good shepherd is the one in John (cf chapter 10).

I also think it is interesting to note that Jesus allowed Peter to confess his love for Him three times, in direct contrast to Peter's three denials of Christ. It's like the Lord was giving Peter a chance to wipe the slate clean. The Lord is always so ready to forgive us and let us start over again. It makes me think of these verses in Lamentations.

Lamentations 3:22-23 "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

Pastor Fidel Gomez was teaching on this scripture recently and made an interesting application. He compared the fish to Peter's job, the boats to his possessions, and the disciples to his relationships. The application: Peter, do I mean more to you than your job, your possessions and your relationships. The application to every believer is obvious.

John 21:18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.

John 21:19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Jesus reminds Peter that when he was younger, he dressed himself and went where he wanted to go. Then he tells Peter that when he is old, someone else would dress him and lead him where he did not want to go. (This was a prediction, according to John, of Peter's death, which would glorify God.) Then He told Peter to "Follow me." I believe that Jesus was comforting Peter with the knowledge that his death would glorify God.

I'm not sure I totally understand all that was going on in this exchange. Jesus so understood this impetuous, brawny, zealous disciple of His. I think one thing He is doing is emphasizing what He wanted Peter to have as a priority in his

life—making new disciples for the Lord, teaching them, encouraging them, and guiding them. He reminds him that he will be taking care of lambs (younger, more immature believers) and sheep (older, more mature believers).

The more mature we get in our faith, it seems trials and tests seem to come with greater frequency and intensity. Satan knows that there is a great ripple effect when he can cause a more mature Christian to stumble/goof up big time—so his attack is intensified. The key is that at all stages of life, believers need nourishment (the teaching of God’s word) and encouragement and guidance. Peter would always have his own life as a reminder of that.

Yet, Jesus was also encouraging Peter. He was letting him know that He had confidence in him. That he would rise to the occasion in the times to come and would not fail. His testimony would be so powerful that he would die for “Following Jesus.”

John 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

John 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

After this conversation, Peter turned around and saw John following them. (John still doesn’t call himself by name, but he reminds us again that he is “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and is the one who was closest to the Lord at the Last Supper, the one who had questioned Jesus about who would betray him.) So Peter asks Jesus what was going to happen to him (John)?

John 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

John 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

Jesus’ answer to this question leads me to believe that Peter understood that Jesus was referring to Peter’s death earlier. Jesus basically said, If I decide to let him stay alive until I come back, so what? You follow me. Basically, God has a plan for each one of us. We are not to make judgments or comparisons between ourselves and other believers. We will inevitably draw the wrong conclusions every time. God wants us to submit to His leading in our lives without question. He wants us to trust Him, have faith in Him.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him.”

Evidently this information (from whose lips?) produced a rumor that John would not die. That wasn’t what Jesus said. (We need to be so careful with our words.) Jesus had just said IF that is what I choose, it shouldn’t affect your service to me.

John 21:24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

Then John identifies himself as the penman of this record and affirms that his testimony is true. John then reminds us again that Jesus did many other things, but to record them all would produce so many books that the whole world couldn't hold them all. (I believe that if it were to contain His works from eternity, that would be the case.....But I rather believe John was using a little poetic license here to make his point.)

Matthew and Mark give us the words of the great commission which evidently happened after this account ended.

Matthew 28:16-20 "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Mark 16:15-18 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Mark's account informs us that there would be miraculous signs that would identify those who were followers of Jesus. These signs would be theirs through the power of His name.

Both Mark and Luke tell us of the Lord's ascension into heaven.

Mark 16:19-20 "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

Luke 24:49-53 "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."

Luke's account is connected with a bunch of "ands" added to the account of His appearance to the disciples after meeting with the two on the road to Emmaus. I

am guessing at where to break the account. Obviously, Jesus' fellowship with the disciples on the lake where he specifically restored and commissioned Peter happened before His ascension. Luke actually tells us in Acts that the Lord was on the earth interacting with His followers for forty days.

At some point the Lord instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). He then leads them up the Mount of Olives as far as Bethany, lifts His hands, and blesses them. As He is blessing them, He is carried up to heaven where Mark tells us He is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

I thought it appropriate to close these events with Luke's words in the beginning of Acts.

Acts 1:5-11 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Important points to note:

- The believers were to expect the baptism of the Spirit as distinct from their water baptism.
- Their concern was not to be regarding the specific time that Israel would be restored as a kingdom in blessing under God. They were to be content with the knowledge that it would happen in God's perfect time.
- They were to serve as His witnesses in Jerusalem and unto the whole world.
- Jesus ascended visibly, and the angels declared that He would return just as visibly.

Even so, Come Lord Jesus!