

# The Gospel of John

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## Chapter Twenty-one

### Epilogue

#### John 21:1-6 NASB

*After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. (2) Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. (3) Simon Peter \*said to them, "I am going fishing." They \*said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. (4) But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. (5) So Jesus \*said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." (6) And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.*

This is the only Gospel in which Sea of Galilee is called the Sea of Tiberias (6:1 also). From His appearances, we know that He can make Himself appear at His will to whomever He wishes. Several of His disciples had returned to Galilee from Jerusalem and John relates this event to seven of them. Simon Peter is called the leader of the group as he invited them to go fishing with him. Although not named here, in verse 7 we see that John was among the group so he would have had intimate knowledge of this event. Peter does not seem capable of sitting and waiting as we will also read in Acts. They were accomplished fishermen but this night they caught no fish. At dawn Jesus was standing at the beach although the disciples did not yet recognize Him. Jesus advised them to put the net into the other side of the boat, the starboard side where He said they would catch some fish. They immediately caught so many fish that they could not pull it into the boat so they would have had to drag it behind the boat.

#### John 21:7-14 NASB

*Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved \*said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. (8) But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish. (9) So when they got out on the land, they \*saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. (10) Jesus \*said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." (11) Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. (12) Jesus \*said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. (13) Jesus \*came and \*took the bread and \*gave it to them, and the fish likewise. (14) This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.*

John was the first to recognize Jesus and Peter impetuously threw himself into the water after putting on his outer garment. It seems strange to put on the outer garment since he was going to swim to shore but it seems such was out of respect for His Lord. The remaining disciples brought the small boat to shore dragging the net full of fish. When they arrived on land the fire was already prepared with some fish and bread on it. Jesus told them to bring some of the fish they had caught to add to the meal. It seems that Peter pulled the net full of 153 fish to the land and that would have taken some great strength. So it seems that Peter indeed was the “big fisherman”. Several people have tried to give some significance to the number of fish but it is most likely just told to show that someone was paying close attention to the details of this meeting. Jesus then told them to come and eat breakfast. It was a very familiar event to have them gathered about Jesus by the lake but it was also very weird since He had returned from the dead. But they all knew He was Jesus and so did not question His identity. As it is today, nobody can recognize Jesus unless He makes Himself known first to them. In the Luke episode of Jesus appearing to disciples, they give Him a fish: “*They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; (43) and He took it and ate it before them.*” (Luke 24:4-43). But in this event Jesus took the bread and fish and gave them the food to eat. Only in the Luke narrative is Jesus recorded as eating anything but it may not be that He digested it for we can only assume that happened.

In John’s narrative this is the third appearance of Jesus to His disciples (20:19-23; 20:2-29; and here). It is impossible to place this appearance chronologically with the appearances stated by the Synoptic Gospels. The word translated “manifested” is much more exhaustive than using a word to mean just “appeared” for it denotes a complete understanding of the event.

### **John 21:15-17 NASB**

*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." (16) 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." (17) 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.*

Now comes the occasion that must have been devastating to Peter as Jesus took him aside and asked him three times if he loved Him. Jesus used the word *agapao* the first two times and *phileo* that third time. In his answers Peter is quoted as using *phileo* all three times. The first question was if Peter loved Jesus more than the other disciples and Peter could not directly answer that question so he just stated that he loved Jesus. These three questions must have hurt Peter for he would have remembered how he had denied knowing Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest’s palace. Jesus gave Peter his pastoral charge to “tend My lambs”, “Shepherd My sheep”, and “Tend My sheep”. Some people have gone to great lengths to make something out of the usage of the Greek words but John tended to interchange the words without any deep meaning. We can only be sure that Jesus was reminding Peter of his earlier denial and making him take very seriously his charge to care for the people who come to Jesus as their Lord.

**John 21:18- 19NASB**

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." (19) Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He \*said to him, "Follow Me!"*

At the writing of this gospel, Peter had already glorified God in his martyrdom. In writing these first two verses John may have then been reading into verse 18 what had happened to Peter as he wrote in verse 19. Clement of Rome (c. AD 96) wrote of his martyrdom but does not specify the means. Tertullian wrote (c. AD 212) that Peter was bound to the cross and girt by someone else. In non-canonical sources it is reported that Peter was crucified upside down at his request but that is uncertain. Jesus then concludes His commission of Peter by telling him to "Follow Me!"

**John 21:20-23 NASB**

*Peter, turning around, \*saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" So Peter seeing him \*said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" (22) Jesus \*said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" (23) Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"*

Now John clearly identifies himself with the beloved disciple as he repeats the occasion mentioned in the upper room (13:23). Peter then looked back and saw John following them so he asked what would become of him. Jesus told him that such was none of his business and that he should just do what he had to do in following Jesus. The comment by Jesus that John might "remain until I come" was taken by some to mean that Jesus would come again at the End Time before John died but that is not what He meant. Fitting this comment within the context of this entire gospel, it is certain that Jesus was referring to His coming to take His people home: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:3) This blessed event applies to all of His disciples, including those of this time frame.

**John 21:24-25 NASB**

*This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. (25) And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they \*were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself \*would not contain the books that \*would be written.*

John added the proof that he was indeed the author of this wonderful gospel. He is stating that he was present during the events he described and that the testimony is exact. This is the only gospel in which the author was present for the events discussed. He also received the gift of the Holy Spirit to bring to his memory the words and actions of Christ so that he could report them accurately (14:26; 16:14). We cannot know the identity of the people who add their assurance

that the testimony is true at the end of verse 24. They may have been disciples of John who helped share this gospel. They would also have had the assurance of the Holy Spirit that the statements are true, as can those of us today who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit and are touched by the truth of the entire message. God dwells in us and we dwell in Him!

It is not known who added verse 25 as it may be the “we” of verse 24. But it may be seen as an expression of the awesomeness of the Person of Jesus Christ. He who is infinite was on earth a short time before evil man was used to end His physical life but accentuate His infinite life and its effect on all those disciples who have joined Him in 2000 years. We can only hail Him, as did Thomas (20:28), as “my Lord and my God”! May God continue to bless John for his obedience to prepare this wonderful account of the mission of the Son of God.

### **Appearances of Jesus after His Resurrection**

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18) near the tomb on the morning of the first day.
2. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, the other Mary (the mother of James and Joseph) and possibly Salome (Matt 28:9-10) near the tomb on the morning of the first day.
3. He appeared to Peter (Luke 24:33-35, 1 Cor 15:5) at an unknown place on the first day.
4. He appeared to two disciples, one named Cleopas, (Luke 24:13-32) on the road to Emmaus on the afternoon of the first day.
5. He appeared to the ten disciples minus Judas and Thomas, the two from Emmaus, and other disciples (Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-25) in the upper room on the evening of the first day.
6. He appeared to Thomas and the ten disciples (John 20:26-31) in the upper room on the evening of the eighth day.
7. He appeared to seven disciples (John 21) on the Sea of Galilee at an unknown time.
8. He appeared to five hundred believers (Matt 28:16-20, 1 Cor 15:6) at Galilee at an unknown time.
9. He appeared to James (His half-brother) (1 Cor 15:7) at Galilee at an unknown time.
10. He appeared to the eleven disciples (Luke 24:44-49) in Jerusalem probably during the last week before His ascension.
11. He appeared to the eleven disciples and probably others (Luke 24:50-52, Acts 1:4-11) at the Mount of Olives on the fortieth day after His resurrection (Ascension Day).
12. He appeared to Paul (1 Cor 15:8, Acts 9:3-6) on the road to Damascus sometime after the ascension.