

CONCERNING THE WAY

January 12, 2010

LESSON 88: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Chapter 20 – Christ the Victorious One

Something happened almost two thousand years ago that changed the course of history. It even changed the calendar from B.C. (before Christ) to A.D. (the Latin Anno Domini - the year of our Lord). That something was so incredible that it completely changed the lives of eleven men, so that all but one died a martyrs' death, and all of them went to their graves testifying to the reality of what happened. That something was an empty tomb!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical fact, not a myth! There is more evidence for the Resurrection than for almost any other event in history. No one has ever been able to refute it. It is THE foundation - without it Christianity is meaningless and our faith is useless (1 Corinthians 15:14-19). Every other religion worships or looks to a dead leader. True Christianity is a relationship with the living God and His Son Jesus.

We don't have the space here to enumerate through all the evidence that this really happened, but there are many excellent books, a few of which I list at the end of this study that you should read if you're interested.

John 20:1-2 Now very early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance. (2) So she went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

The "first day of the week" would be early Sunday morning. The Sabbath (and in this year the Passover) would have lasted from 6:00 P.M. Friday until 6:00 P.M. Saturday. So now, since the Sabbath was over, the women could come and anoint Jesus' body with spices (Mark 16:1). Some people get confused by the timing of this, since Jesus was not in the tomb for three full days. Jesus died on Friday afternoon, so this was the third day - Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

The other gospels tell us that there were other women that went to the tomb, but in this chapter John seems to focus on Mary Magdalene, so he doesn't mention any others. Luke 8:2 tells us that she had become one of Jesus' followers after He had cast seven evil spirits out of her. It appears that Mary didn't even bother to look into the tomb, but immediately ran to Peter and John, to tell them.

I think it's important to point out that the female followers of Jesus couldn't do much for Jesus, because of the restrictions of their society. But they did what they could. They stayed by Him when He was crucified and most of His other disciples disappeared. And they brought spices to anoint Jesus' body, and this is why Jesus appeared to the women first after He rose from the dead. You may not have the opportunity or ability to do great things for Jesus either, but you can give Him your love and devotion like these women did.

"The fact that the women were the first to discover the empty tomb is certainly authentic, as this

alone would have discredited the story with the Jewish public (in Jesus' society, sadly, women were not even thought fit witnesses in court)." Bruce Milne

The stone had been moved away from the entrance to the tomb, which was no small feat, since they could be as big as six or seven feet high and there were Roman soldiers guarding it so that no one could get into the tomb and steal Jesus' body. So we know that the removal of the stone was supernatural, and Matthew confirms this in his account:

Matthew 28:1-4 Now after the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. (2) Suddenly there was a severe earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descending from heaven came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. (3) His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. (4) The guards were shaken and became like dead men because they were so afraid of him.

Mark tells us what the women saw when they arrived at the tomb:

Mark 16:1-5 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought aromatic spices so that they might go and anoint him. (2) And very early on the first day of the week, at sunrise, they went to the tomb. (3) They had been asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" (4) But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled back. (5) Then as they went into the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

John says that Mary Magdalene immediately ran to tell the disciples, so this must be the other women who went into the tomb and saw the angel. Matthew tells us what the angel said:

Matthew 28:5-10 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. (6) He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he was lying. (7) Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there.' Listen, I have told you!" (8) So they left the tomb quickly, with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (9) But Jesus met them, saying, "**Greetings!**" They came to him, held on to his feet and worshiped him. (10) Then Jesus said to them, "**Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. They will see me there.**"

These women apparently were the first to see the risen Jesus! This is another reason we think Mary Magdalene wasn't with these women at this time, because she didn't see Jesus until later. Here's Luke's account, which gives us a few more details:

Luke 24:2-9 They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, (3) but when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. (4) While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood beside them in dazzling attire. (5) The women were terribly frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? (6) He is not here, but has been raised! Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, (7) that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." (8) Then the women remembered his words, (9) and when they returned from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

So all the women, including Mary Magdalene, have gone to tell the disciples what they had seen. So now the disciples have heard that the stone has been rolled away from Mary Magdalene, and the other women came and told them that they saw angels who told them Jesus had risen, and then on the way back actually saw the Lord Himself! Meanwhile:

Matthew 28:11-15 While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. (12) After they had assembled with the elders and formed a plan, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, (13) telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came at night and stole his body while we were asleep.' (14) If this matter is heard before the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." (15) So they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story is told among the Jews to this day.

Finally, let's go back to John to see what the disciples do. Most of them are skeptical, but Peter and John have to find out for themselves:

John 20:3-4 Then Peter and the other disciple set out to go to the tomb. (4) The two were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first.

This is a funny comment by John (he was the other disciple). Most believe that Peter was a fairly big man, and so John outruns Peter to the tomb, and he just had to put that fact in here. It's things like this that validate the reality of this story, and John was there.

John 20:5-7 He bent down and saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, but he did not go in. (6) Then Simon Peter, who had been following him, arrived and went right into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, (7) and the face cloth, which had been around Jesus' head, not lying with the strips of linen cloth but rolled up in a place by itself.

There's many speculations and analysis about these verses, most believe that these statements are saying that the outer strips that were wrapped around Jesus (and many say they would have been sealed with wax) were just lying there empty, as Jesus' resurrected body just passed right through them without disturbing them. The face cloth, however, which was like a handkerchief that was laid over the face of the body, was not undisturbed but was rolled up and placed separately from the linen strips.

What's more important, though, is that the fact that the graveclothes were there is good evidence that the body was not stolen. Anyone who came to steal the body would not have bothered to unwrap all those linen strips from the body. And even if they had, the cloth would have been strewn all over the place.

John 20:8-10 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, came in, and he saw and believed. (9) (For they did not yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead.) (10) So the disciples went back to their homes.

So John then came in and realized that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. Even though Jesus had told them what was going to happen, even Peter and John didn't really understand it until this point. The scriptures John is speaking of could be Isaiah 53:10-12 and Psalm 16:10, which is probably the verses that John read later and connected them with what had happened.

The resurrection of Jesus proves His divinity, it fulfills prophecy and proves that God wrote history in advance, and it proves that we are saved from our sins once and for all. It's a done deal.

John 20:11-12 But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she bent down and looked into the tomb. (12) And she saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus' body had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet.

After Peter and John had gone, Mary Magdalene, who had apparently come back to the tomb with the two disciples, looks into the tomb. At this point, Mary still doesn't understand what has happened, she probably thinks the body has been stolen. And I don't think she realizes these two beings there are angels, they must have looked very human. In Biblical appearances of angels, there's never mention of wings or halos. It's interesting that in all these accounts, angels only appeared to women, not to the men.

John 20:13-14 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Mary replied, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!" (14) When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Remember that it wasn't fully light yet, which would explain why she didn't recognize Jesus. Maybe her eyes were blurred with tears. She had also seen the terrible beating Jesus had taken and how disfigured He was on the cross. So she wouldn't have expected this person to be Jesus at all.

John 20:15-16 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Because she thought he was the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him." (16) Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni" (which means Teacher).

There was something about the way Jesus called her by name - she recognized Him in that moment. Jesus' first two appearances after He was risen are to women! This testifies to the authenticity of these stories. No Jewish author in the ancient world would have invented a story with women as the first witnesses to this most important event.

John 20:17-18 Jesus replied, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (18) Mary Magdalene came and informed the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what Jesus had said to her.

So Jesus had just risen, and had not yet gone to heaven. The phrase "Do not touch me" in Greek has more the sense of "stop holding on to me." Mary probably hugged Him and wasn't letting Him go, and Jesus told her to let Him go, because He had to go the Father. She was hanging on to Him.

His relationship to His followers now is not just as a human friend or teacher. He is now immortalized and glorified and "though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer." (2 Corinthians 5:16).

He had gone in the spirit to proclaim His victory to the wicked spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:18-20). It is believed by most theologians that Jesus took the Old Testament saints from Abraham's bosom (Paradise) to the Father in heaven (see Ephesians 4:8-10). So He needed to do that now that He had risen. He also had to go cleanse the heavenly places with His blood (Hebrews 9:12,23). He had

risen but He had not completed His glorification until He did those things.

Some believe that these words spoke of a new relationship, new relatives, and a new responsibility. Jesus said, in effect, "This (the physical contact) is not My real presence for the church. A *new relationship* will begin with My Ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church." Jesus then explained the fact of the *new relatives*. He called His disciples His brothers. Earlier He had said they were friends: "I no longer call you servants... instead, I have called you friends" (15:15). Believers in Jesus become a part of Jesus' family with God as their Father (Hebrews 2:11-12; Romans 8:15-17, 29; Galatians 3:26). Mary's *new responsibility* was to testify to His risen presence.

Now let's go to Luke for an event that John does not include. These are two disciples of Jesus, but not two of the original eleven.

Luke 24:13-16 Now that very day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. (14) They were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. (15) While they were talking and debating these things, Jesus himself approached and began to accompany them (16) (but their eyes were kept from recognizing him).

These two disciples were obviously aware of what had happened, and were trying to figure out whether or not Jesus had really risen, what had happened to the body, etc. But when He came along Jesus somehow kept them from recognizing Him

Luke 24:17-24 Then he said to them, "What are these matters you are discussing so intently as you walk along?" And they stood still, looking sad. (18) Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?" (19) He said to them, "What things?" "The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene," they replied, "a man who, with his powerful deeds and words, proved to be a prophet before God and all the people; (20) and how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be condemned to death, and crucified him. (21) But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Not only this, but it is now the third day since these things happened. (22) Furthermore, some women of our group amazed us. They were at the tomb early this morning, (23) and when they did not find his body, they came back and said they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. (24) Then some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him."

Here we get a fascinating glimpse inside the mind of two of Jesus' followers, and we see what they were thinking about all these events. Jesus' crucifixion had drastically messed up the disciples' expectations of what Jesus was there to do, and they were confused. They also were skeptical of the reports of the empty tomb.

Luke 24:25-27 So he said to them, "You foolish people — how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (26) Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (27) Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things written about himself in all the scriptures.

The reference to "Moses and all the prophets" is a way to say the promise of Messiah runs throughout the Old Testament from beginning to end. How wonderful to have been there listening

to Jesus explaining all the places in the scriptures that are about Him!

Luke 24:28-35 So they approached the village where they were going. He acted as though he wanted to go farther, (29) but they urged him, "Stay with us, because it is getting toward evening and the day is almost done." So he went in to stay with them. (30) When he had taken his place at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. (31) At this point their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Then he vanished out of their sight. (32) They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us while he was speaking with us on the road, while he was explaining the scriptures to us?" (33) So they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and those with them gathered together (34) and saying, "The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon!" (35) Then they told what had happened on the road, and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

Jesus apparently had appeared to Peter privately, which isn't recorded in any of the gospels, before these two disciples had set out, and they had heard about it. This may have been to allow Peter to confess his sin of denying Jesus three times, and receiving forgiveness from Jesus. It's interesting that these disciples recognized Him when He broke the bread, maybe it was the way He did it at the last supper that reminded them. Now let's continue with this meeting of the disciples in the John account.

John 20:19-20 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the disciples had gathered together and locked the doors of the place because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" (20) When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

It looks like the disciples didn't really believe what Mary, Peter, and John had said, because they were huddled together in a locked room. If they had really believed it, they would have been out shouting the news to everyone!

John is telling us that the doors were locked, so we can see that it didn't keep Jesus out. He either opened the doors miraculously or went right through the walls. The disciples were scared and confused, and Jesus came and told them to calm down, everything was all right. Apparently they didn't realize it was really Jesus until He had showed them His wounds from the crucifixion. And when He did, can you imagine the joy and excitement that filled the room! The phrase "the disciples rejoiced" doesn't do justice to the scene that would have unfolded. This was a fulfillment of Jesus' words to the disciples in (John 16:20-22) that they would have sorrow while the world rejoiced, but that their sorrow would be turned to lasting joy when they saw him again. Let's look at Luke's description of how this happened, which is more detailed:

Luke 24:36-42 While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" (37) But they were startled and terrified, thinking they saw a ghost. (38) Then he said to them, "**Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? (39) Look at my hands and my feet; it's me! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones like you see I have.**" (40) When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. (41) And while they still could not believe it (because of their joy) and were amazed, he said to them, "**Do you have anything here to eat?**" (42) So they gave him a piece of broiled fish, (43) and he took it

and ate it in front of them.

Jesus ate something to prove to them (and to us today) that He wasn't a ghost or spirit, He was still a real man with a physical body.

Luke 24:44-49 Then he said to them, "**These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.**" (45) Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures, (46) and said to them, "**Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day, (47) and repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (48) You are witnesses of these things. (49) And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.**"

He "opened their minds" so they could understand the scriptures. If you want to understand the Bible, you must ask that God, through the Holy Spirit, will reveal it to you. Verse 47 will be fulfilled in the book of Acts, in our next study. The fact that the disciples were witnesses to all these things will be the key part of their testimony when they proclaim repentance to all nations. "Clothed with power on high" refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They were to stay in Jerusalem until then.

John 20:21-23 So Jesus said to them again, "**Peace be with you. Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.**" (22) And after he said this, he breathed on them and said, "**Receive the Holy Spirit. (23) If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained.**"

Jesus gets down to business. He tells the disciples that there's work to do, He's sending them out. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into them here, which recalls God breathing the breath of life into Adam in Genesis 2:7. This time Jesus is breathing the breath of eternal life into the disciples (see John 3:3-10). It also recalls Ezekiel 37:1-14, the prophecy of the resurrection of the dry bones.

How do we relate this to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2? Well, the Holy Spirit probably didn't indwell them at this very moment, since Jesus just told them to stay in the city until He came at Pentecost 50 days later. We know not all the disciples were here at this time (Thomas wasn't there at least - verse 24). This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later.

It's important to remember that these events occurred at a specific time in history and are not repeatable today. Some people try to read too much into verses like these and in Acts and try to build present day theology on them. Starting with the Resurrection and going on well into the book of Acts, it is a time of transition that will never again be repeated. We'll talk a lot about that in the Acts study.

Verse 23 is a very misused verse. It is taken by Catholics to prove that priests have the power to forgive or not forgive sins, with the authority of the pope. But that's not with this is about. For one thing, this is a onetime delegation of authority to the original disciples. There is no indication or assumption that can be made that this authority was handed down to anyone but the disciples. And this is not about apostolic authority to forgive or retain sins of individuals, but about having the

authority to proclaim the forgiveness of sins that God has already granted in heaven through Jesus Christ. The apostles will be acting out what God has already done in heaven, they will be confirming judgment or blessing upon the Jews. You can see the idea of this in Matthew 16 where Jesus is speaking to Peter:

Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven."

The grammar of this verse and John 20:23 is virtually the same. The apostles will be the conduits of what God will be doing with the Jewish people.

John 20:24-25 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. (25) The other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "Unless I see the wounds from the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe it!"

For some reason Thomas wasn't there in the room when Jesus appeared to the group. So he still didn't believe that Jesus had risen. He's actually like a lot of people. If they can't see it or touch it they won't believe it.

John 20:26-27 Eight days later the disciples were again together in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" (27) Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe."

We don't know if Jesus made this appearance just for Thomas' benefit or not, but it does show us that Jesus is willing to go to great lengths to prove Himself even to a skeptic. He met Thomas where he was at spiritually and provided him with the evidence he (Thomas) thought he needed.

Jesus allowed Thomas to do much more than "touch" Him, something He told Mary Magdalene not to do (John 20:17). However, in the eight days since, He had not only led the Old Testament saints up into paradise but also had presented His shed blood to the Father (Hebrews 9:23-28), received the Father's promise (Psalm 2:7-9), and presented the firstfruits (Leviticus 23:10; 1 Corinthians 15:23). He has now been glorified. But, Thomas did not need to touch Him. To him, seeing was believing!

John 20:28-29 Thomas replied to him, "My Lord and my God!" (29) Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thomas finally comes to the full realization of who Jesus was. He was a doubter no longer! He clearly recognized at this point that Jesus was God, so don't tell me the New Testament doesn't say that Jesus is God.

You and I are more blessed than the disciples, did you know that? We are more blessed because we have trusted in Christ without having seen Him and touched His wounds. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). This verse certainly applies to us but Jesus may be specifically speaking of people in that day who had already believed in Him without having the proof of His resurrection.

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. (31) But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This verse tells us that the gospel writers were selective in the events of Jesus' life they chose to tell. That's why each gospel is a little different, they each had a purpose in writing those gospels and only included the events which they felt supported that purpose. Then John states his purpose, speaking directly to us, for writing this book. So that we may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and so that we may have eternal life through Him.

Some make a big deal out of trying to figure out whether John wrote this book to believers or unbelievers, but when you look at the entire content, it's obvious it was written to both. It is to witness to unbelievers about Jesus, so that they would come to believe in him and have eternal life; and to strengthen the faith of believers, by deepening and expanding their understanding of who Jesus is.

"He (John) aims, not at knowledge, but at faith, and through faith at life. He is not a philosopher, but a witness; his work as a historian forms a part of his apostolic ministry. In all times, those who have not seen will be able through his testimony to reach the same faith and the same life as himself." F. L. Godet

Chapter 21 – Christ the Great Shepherd

Well, the end of chapter 20 would have been a fine place to end the book, but John includes a sort of "epilogue" in chapter 21. He gives us the account of Jesus' appearance to Peter and others by Lake Galilee, which shows us that Jesus forgave Peter after his three denials. Some people think that this chapter should be taken symbolically, which has given rise to all kinds of wild speculation on what the different elements mean. I don't find any of them compelling, and think we should just take it as written. John just wanted us to know these things happened, that's all.

John 21:1-3 After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. Now this is how he did so. (2) Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael (who was from Cana in Galilee), the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples of his were together. (3) Simon Peter told them, "I am going fishing." "We will go with you," they replied. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

So the disciples that were present at this appearance by Jesus were Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two others that are not named (may have been Andrew and Phillip) - seven in all. The disciples were still unclear about what they were supposed to do next, as Peter seems to say, "Phooey, I'm just going to go fishing." They realize now that the kingdom is not going to be established at this time, so they were probably thinking they needed to go back to their previous ways of making a living, and for Peter, that was fishing. Peter had a family to support and probably had a sense of failure over his sin in denying the Lord. You can see his leadership quality, though, in that six other disciples went with him.

Little did they understand as yet that God was going to use these men to launch a new program previously unrevealed that would endure for a time before the kingdom would start, called by many

the Church Age or the Age of Grace.

John 21:4-6 When it was already very early morning, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. (5) So Jesus said to them, "**Children, you don't have any fish, do you?**" They replied, "No." (6) He told them, "**Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.**" So they threw the net, and were not able to pull it in because of the large number of fish.

This was very similar to the miracle that Jesus did at the beginning of His ministry with the disciples (Luke 5:1-11). We're often a lot like the disciples. We do things in our own strength, making decisions without praying about them. Doing anything without God's guidance isn't going to catch any fish!

"The net filled with fish was a promise. It was Jesus' way of saying, "Don't worry, I can and will continue to meet every material need." The disciples would soon set out on the most insecure of all lives: they would be traveling evangelists, dependent on others for their food and lodging. Though these skilled fisherman had practiced their trade all night, they had caught nothing. But a single word from Jesus filled their nets." Lawrence O. Richards

John 21:7-8 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" So Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, tucked in his outer garment (for he had nothing on underneath it), and plunged into the sea. (8) Meanwhile the other disciples came with the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from land, only about a hundred yards.

Well, John, because of the miracle of all these fish, realized that it was Jesus on the shore. He probably remembered the previous miracle with the fish. And Peter, impulsive as usual, jumped into the water and swam the hundred yards to the shore.

John 21:9-11 When they got out on the beach, they saw a charcoal fire ready with a fish placed on it, and bread. (10) Jesus said, "**Bring some of the fish you have just now caught.**" (11) So Simon Peter went aboard and pulled the net to shore. It was full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three, but although there were so many, the net was not torn.

There have been all kinds of allegorical and spiritual interpretations of the large 153 fish, none of which seem to have any validity. People sometimes try to read too much into these historical events. John was just giving us the details of something that he was there for. Only a fisherman would tell us exactly how many fish there were and that they were large!

Notice that Jesus was already cooking some fish, He didn't wait for them to bring Him some. Where did He get them? He could have made them jump out of the water onto the shore, for all we know, but it is interesting. Jesus tells them to bring some fish for themselves, so Peter apparently pulled the net full of fish to shore by himself, even though the other disciples had been unable to do so. Was this another miracle?

John 21:12-14 "**Come, have breakfast,**" Jesus said. But none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. (13) Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. (14) This was now the third

time Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

This would have been the third time Jesus had appeared to the disciples as a group - the first two times were when he appeared in the upper room in Jerusalem behind locked doors.

John 21:15 Then when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "**Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these do?**" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus told him, "**Feed my lambs.**"

Understand that there is wordplay going on here that we miss in English. Jesus is using the word *agapao* for love here, which means love in a social or moral sense, a deep sacrificial love. Peter answers back using the word *phileo* for love, which means to be fond of, or have affection for, as a feeling for a friend. Jesus tells him that he is responsible (and the other disciples as well) to take over Jesus' responsibilities to the sheep (believers).

You get the sense in the gospels that Peter thought he loved Jesus more than any of the other disciples (Matthew 26:33, Mark 14:29). Here you see Jesus challenging him on that, saying, after all that has happened, do you still think you love me more than the rest do?

John 21:16 Jesus said a second time, "**Simon, son of John, do you love me?**" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus told him, "**Shepherd my sheep.**"

The same Greek words are being used by Jesus and Peter here, only now Jesus isn't asking if Peter loves Him more than the other disciples do, just "do you love me"? Peter responds the same way, saying, "Yes, Lord, you know I'm fond of you." He is only being honest here. After his failure by denying Jesus three times, he sees the true condition of his heart. Now Jesus tells him to shepherd the sheep, which is more than just feeding them, it would be also to guide and protect them. This is where we get the word "pastor". Peter is now ready to pastor the flock.

John 21:17 Jesus said a third time, "**Simon, son of John, do you love me?**" Peter was distressed that Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus replied, "**Feed my sheep.**"

This time Jesus uses *phileo* instead of *agapao* for love, and now Peter is grieved that Jesus is questioning his love for Him. Jesus is basically saying, well, OK, if you can't say you really really love me, then do you at least like me? And Peter says, OK, you've got me, you know everything.

So what's going on here? Why did Peter not make a stronger profession of love for Jesus? We don't know for sure, but Jesus was exposing Peter's true feelings. We don't want to make too much of a distinction between these words for love, because John uses both as synonyms throughout the book. But since Peter had denied Him three times, now Jesus was asking for Peter to affirm his love three times. This event is recognized as Jesus restoring Peter to service publicly, and to full fellowship with Him. John wanted us to see that this happened. Peter's ministry would be feeding and shepherding God's children like Jesus had. His fishing career was over.

But, even more importantly, Jesus showed Peter the heart attitude he needed to be a pastor, and this is very instructive for anyone who wants to be a pastor or leader in the church. You must understand and be honest about the condition of your heart. You cannot have false confidence in yourself and your abilities, but only trust Christ. You must understand your own weaknesses and

frailties and lead with humility. Peter learned this, and it is absolutely necessary for anyone who wants to be a Christian leader.

<i>Proper motivation for service to God</i>	
Wrong Motivation	The Only Right Motivation
A way to remove feelings of guilt	Out of love for the Lord Jesus!
An attempt to earn forgiveness and a ticket to heaven	
Trying to measure up to the expectations of others or of yourself	
To prove something to someone	
To gain approval or recognition	
To gain materially	
To build up more good works than bad works	

John 21:18-19 I tell you the solemn truth, when you were young, you tied your clothes around you and went wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will tie you up and bring you where you do not want to go." (19) (Now Jesus said this to indicate clearly by what kind of death Peter was going to glorify God.) After he said this, Jesus told Peter, "Follow me."

Jesus is saying that Peter will die as a martyr, and maybe even describes the method of crucifixion (stretch out your hands). Peter had already died by the time John wrote this book. Jerome and other early church fathers said that Peter was crucified upside down, because he felt he was not worthy to be crucified like Jesus.

"Follow me" was the same command Jesus had given to Peter when He first called him (Matthew 4:18-19). The form of the command in Greek means to keep on following. This is Jesus' command to us as well. Following Jesus is not a onetime thing, but a lifetime walk.

John 21:20-22 Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them. (This was the disciple who had leaned back against Jesus' chest at the meal and asked, "Lord, who is the one who is going to betray you?") (21) So when Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" (22) Jesus replied, "If I want him to live until I come back, what concern is that of yours? You follow me!"

The disciple Peter was asking Jesus about was John. He wanted to know what would happen to John. Jesus told Peter to mind his own business!

John 21:23 So the saying circulated among the brothers and sisters that this disciple was not going to die. But Jesus did not say to him that he was not going to die, but rather, "If I want him to live until I come back, what concern is that of yours?"

Some people to this day think that John may still be alive somewhere, but this verse clearly says that's not what Jesus was saying. He was just telling Peter not to worry about when John was going to die, that's not your business, you just concentrate on following me. This is a good lesson for us, too. What God is doing in someone else's life is none of our business (other than praying for them). You worry about your own walk with Jesus.

In one sense, John did live until the Lord's coming, because as a prisoner on the isle of Patmos he

was translated into the future to see and record all the main events associated with Christ’s return in the book of Revelation.

John 21:24-25 This is the disciple who testifies about these things and has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. (25) There are many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Greek, Roman, and Jewish legal documents ended with a testimony by witnesses. John is adding his endorsement that what he wrote was true since he was an eyewitness to the events, but “we know that his testimony is true” may have been added by others who knew John well and were giving what he said their seal of approval.

Verse 25 is an exaggeration, of course, but you get the point. There are many other things that Jesus did that were not written down, and hopefully we’ll get to learn about all of Jesus’ life when we get to heaven. And John confirms that he was an eyewitness to all of these things in this book and that it is true, which is an appropriate end to the book. We’ll find out what happened in the years after Jesus’ resurrection in our next study - the book of Acts.

The Postresurrection Appearances of Christ

To Mary Magdalene	John 20:11-18, Mark 16:9-11
To women returning from the tomb	Matthew 28:8-10
To Cleopas and a friend on the Emmaus road	Mark 16:12, Luke 24:13-35
To Peter	1 Corinthians 15:5
To ten disciples in Jerusalem	John 20:19-25, Luke 24:36-49, Acts 1:3-5
To eleven disciples	John 20:26-31, 1 Corinthians 15:5
To seven disciples in Galilee	John 21:1-25
To the apostles and more than five hundred believers	Matthew 28:16-20, 1 Corinthians 15:6
To James	1 Corinthians 15:7
To the apostles on the Mt. of Olives	Acts 1:6-12, 1 Corinthians 15:7
To Stephen at his stoning	Acts 7:55-60
To Paul at his conversion	Acts 9:3-8, 17, 22:6-15, 26:12-19, 1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:8
To Paul at Corinth	Acts 18:9-10
To Paul in the temple	Acts 22:17-21
To Paul later in Jerusalem	Acts 23:11
To Paul in another vision	2 Corinthians 12:1-4
To John on Patmos	Revelation 1

FORTY DAYS—From Resurrection to Ascension SUNDAY MORNING

1. An angel rolled away the stone from Jesus’ tomb before sunrise (Matt. 28:2-4).
2. Women who followed Jesus visited Jesus’ tomb and discovered Him missing (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1).
3. Mary Magdalene left to tell Peter and John (John 20:1-2).
4. The other women, remaining at the tomb, saw two angels who told them about the Resurrection (Matt. 28:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8).

5. Peter and John visited Jesus' tomb (Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10).
6. Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb and Jesus appeared to her alone in the garden (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18)
7. Jesus appeared to the other women (Mary, mother of James, Salome, and Joanna) (Matt. 28:8-10)
8. Those who guarded Jesus' tomb reported to the religious rulers how the angel rolled away the stone. They were then bribed (Matt. 28:11-15).
9. Jesus appeared to Peter (1 Cor. 15:5)

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

10. Jesus appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32)

SUNDAY EVENING

11. The two disciples from Emmaus told others they saw Jesus (Luke 24:33-35).
12. Jesus appeared to 10 apostles, with Thomas absent, in the Upper Room (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25)

THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY

13. Jesus appeared to the 11 Apostles, including Thomas, and Thomas believed (John 20:26-28)

THE FOLLOWING 32 DAYS

14. Jesus appeared to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee and performed a miracle of fish (John 21:1-14)
15. Jesus appeared to 500 (including the Eleven) at a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:6)
16. Jesus appeared to His half-brother James (1 Cor. 15:7)
17. At Jerusalem Jesus appeared again to His disciples (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8)
18. On the Mount of Olives Jesus ascended into heaven while the disciples watched (Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12).

Books for further reading on the Resurrection:

A Ready Defense - Josh McDowell

He Walked Among Us - Josh McDowell

Who Moved the Stone? - Dr. Frank Morrison

The Case For Christ - Lee Strobel