

John Chapter 21 Continued

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

This is a 3rd appearance to the disciples, although there have been appearances to other people. "The third time", the reference to the "3rd time" refers only to the appearances reported in John's Gospel, i.e., the first being (in 20:19-23; the second in 20:26-29).

In the previous lesson, Jesus was on the sea shore feeding the disciples. Now we read that this is the third time that Jesus has appeared to them since the resurrection.

This still bothers me that even after they knew He had resurrected from the grave and was, in fact, glorified. That they would not be out ministering the things that He had taught them. At some point in our life, we must get off the sidelines and get into the heat of battle to win people to the kingdom.

These disciples are sitting around waiting for Jesus to do it all. Jesus I believe, is trying to show them in all of this, that if they will do what He has ordered them to do (cast the net on the right side), they will bring many souls to God.

Verses 21:15-17: This interview was probably conducted within the hearing of the other six disciples. Peter had publicly professed his loyalty before the Crucifixion and Jesus wants the other disciples to understand Peter's restoration. Jesus uses his old name Simon, not "Rock," his new spiritual name.

More than these is a reference to the other disciples (Matthew 26:33), where Peter claimed he would be loyal when all others failed. Jesus repeats the question three times, no doubt to remind Peter of his three denials of his Lord

The meaning of this section hinges upon the usage of 2 synonyms for love. In terms of interpretation, when 2 synonyms are placed in close proximity in context, a difference in meaning, however slight, is emphasized. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, He used a word for love that signified total commitment.

Peter responded with a word for love that signified his love for Jesus, but not necessarily his total commitment. This was not because he was reluctant to express that greater love, but because he had been disobedient and denied the Lord in the past. He was perhaps, now reluctant to make a claim of supreme devotion, when in the past, his life did not support such a claim.

Jesus pressed home to Peter the need for unswerving devotion by repeatedly asking Peter if he loved Him supremely. The essential message here is that Jesus demands total commitment from his followers. Their love for Him must place Him above their love for all else.

Jesus confronted Peter with love because he wanted Peter to lead the apostles (Matthew 16:18). But in order for Peter to be an effective shepherd, his overwhelming drive must exemplify supreme love for his Lord.

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.”

"More than these?" This probably refers to the fish verse 11 representing Peter's profession as a fisherman, for he had gone back to it while waiting for Jesus (see verse 3). Jesus wanted Peter to love Him so supremely as to forsake all that he was familiar with and be exclusively devoted to being a fisher of men (Matthew 4:19). The phrase may also refer to the other disciples, since Peter had claimed he would be more devoted than all the others (Matthew 26:33).

"Tend my lambs". The word "tend" conveys the idea of being devoted to the Lord's service as an under shepherd who cares for his flock (see 1 Peter 5:1-4). The word has the idea of constantly feeding and nourishing the sheep. This served as a reminder that the primary duty of the messenger of Jesus Christ is to teach the Word of God (2 Timothy 4:2).

(Acts 1-12), records Peter's obedience to this commission.

This statement to Peter overlooks the fact that Peter had denied Jesus three times. Jesus had told Peter that he was a rock. When Peter told Jesus that He was Jesus the Christ the Son of the living God, Jesus had told Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed this to Peter, but the Spirit of God.

As we said in a previous lesson, Peter was ready to fight for Jesus. He just didn't understand Jesus allowing them to take Him. Peter has no way of knowing whether he loves Jesus more than these other disciples do. He does know that he has great love for the Lord.

He also knows that Jesus knows what is in his heart. At this point, Peter is just happy that the Lord will have him back at all.

Matthew 16:17-19 “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

We see from this that great power and authority in the church had been given Peter. God never goes back when He has said something. This promise Jesus made Peter was still in effect. Jesus now is telling Peter, get on about your mission, start now to feed my lambs. Feed them, so they can become mature sheep.

These baby Christians who belong to Jesus are the lambs Jesus is talking about. Teach them and make them mature Christians.

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.”

Notice the only difference here in Jesus' reply is He changes lambs to sheep. Peter is to keep the sheep (more mature), Christians in correct fellowship, as well as the lambs.

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.”

Peter was grieved. The 3rd time Jesus asked Peter, He used Peter's word for love that signified something less than total devotion, questioning even the level of Peter thought he was safe in claiming.

The lessons driven home to Peter grieved his heart, so that he sought for a proper understanding of his heart, not by what he said or had done, but based on the Lord's omnipotence (2:24-25).

This is really aggravating Peter, but he should remember that he denied Jesus three times, so now he must reverse that denial into total recognition. Jesus really is telling Peter here, I am setting you over my Church, and you are to see that the pure Word of God is fed to those who believe in me (sheep).

This is a commission of God for Peter to oversee the Church. When Peter called Him Lord, it tells all. Peter will now obey Jesus to the utmost. Jesus does know the great love that Peter has for Him and that is why He entrusts the Church to Peter.

Verses 18-19 are a prophecy of Peter's martyrdom. Jesus called devotion to Him would also mean that Peter's devotion would entail his own death (Matthew 10:37-39). Whenever any Christian follows Christ, he must be prepared to suffer and die (Matthew 16:24-26).

Peter lived three decades serving the Lord and anticipating the death that was before him (2 Peter 1:12-15), but he wrote that such suffering and death for the Lord brings praise to God (1 Peter 4:14-16). Church tradition records that Peter suffered martyrdom under Nero (A.D. 67-68), being crucified upside down, because he refused to be crucified like his Lord.

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

Twenty-five times in the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the expression verily, verily to introduce a concept they here might have difficulty believing. This intensive expression emphasized that what was stated was true just as God is true. In the Old Testament, a person who might be doubted would use such an expression to insist he was telling the truth (Numbers 5:22).

When a Christian approaches his Bible, he should do so with the commitment to believe the whole Word of God and not just part of it. (John 1:51; John 21:18; Romans 1:17).

Jesus Christ the Victor, is telling Peter here, that Peter will be the helm of the church, and Peter in His youth will be strong and will walk in that strength. But He is also telling Peter of his death: that he will be captured and held against his will.

Peter has called Jesus, Lord, so Peter truly is no longer his own man, he will do the will of his Lord. Jesus here, tells Peter of the persecution that will come.

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.”

We see here, Jesus telling Peter that Peter will follow Him not only in His life's work, but in His death as well. Jesus is giving Peter a sign, so that He will know in days to come.

In (verses 18 and 19), Jesus predicts the manner of Peter's death. A late tradition suggests that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome by Nero.

Versus 20-22: Jesus' prophecy regarding Peter's martyrdom prompted Peter to ask what would happen to John ("the disciple whom Jesus loved" (see 13:23). He may have asked this because of his deep concern for John's future, since he was an intimate friend.

Jesus' reply "Follow Me," signified that his primary concern must not be John, but his continued devotion to the Lord and His service. I.e., Christ's service must be his all-consuming passion and nothing must detract from it

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?”

This is speaking of John the beloved.

Perhaps John added this account to counteract a commonly believed notion that Jesus had predicted that John would not die. He did outlive all the other disciples. In fact, all the others were probably dead by the time John wrote this beloved gospel.

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

Peter is trying to get Jesus to tell him what work Jesus will have John to do. This is not the Lord's way though. The Lord will tell John, and only John, what the work is that He has for him to do.

Verses 22-23: "Until I come": Jesus' hypothetical statement for emphasis was that, if John lived until His second coming, it was none of Peter's concern. He needed to live his own life in faithfulness, not compare it with any other.

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

Jesus is telling Peter that each of us has a special work to do that the Lord called only us to do. We should not be concerned about someone else's work, only the work God has given us to do. There is no place for jealousy in God's kingdom.

This also indicates here, that maybe John never died. He could have been like Enoch. On one of the times he went to heaven, maybe he just stayed. There is no record of John ever dying. It really is not any of Peter's business or ours, what happened to John.

That is Jesus' business. He closes this statement to Peter by saying; you just do the work I have given you to do.

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?”

This statement is still brought up today even among Christians. We know that Elijah was carried to heaven in a whirlwind without dying, because he pleased God. John was John the beloved; he pleased God also, so it would not be unlikely that the same thing would happen to him. As I said, it is not our concern.

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 is speaking of himself here. John was very close to Jesus. He was called the disciple of love, because of the great love he had for Jesus. He understood Jesus more than any of the others.

John is a personal witness of the truth of the events that he recorded. The "we" most likely is an editorial device referring only to John (see 1:14; 1 John 1:1-4; 3 John 12), or it may include the collective witness of his apostolic colleagues

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.”

We see from this last statement here (in another way), John is telling us that every miracle and every word uttered by Jesus upon this earth was revealing to mankind the overwhelming fullness of the Godhead.

John explain that he had been selected rather than exhaustive in his testimony. Although selective, the truth revealed in John's Gospel is sufficient to bring anyone to faith in the Messiah and Son of God (14:26; 16:13).

That the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit are all somehow beautifully manifested to man in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ upon the earth. John is so awed by the person of Jesus Christ that he does not have the words to express His greatness.

In (1 John 5:7), he comes as close as possible for any man to describe this completeness “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

In Jesus Christ, the Son of God dwelled all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. God is everything to everyone, in every way.

John Chapter 21 Continued Questions

1. In verse 14, John explains that Jesus had revealed Himself to them after the resurrection how many times?
2. What name did Jesus call Peter in verse 15?
3. What question did Jesus ask Peter?
4. How did Peter answer?
5. What did Jesus tell Peter to do?
6. What had Jesus told Peter he was earlier?
7. Who had revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God?
8. In Matthew 16:17-19, Jesus had placed Peter as what?
9. What are lambs spiritually?

10. What did Jesus ask Peter the second time?
11. What is the only difference in the work Jesus gave Peter to do in the second question?
12. Whose son was Jonas?
13. What one name has Peter called Jesus that tells what Peter's life will be?
14. In verse 18, what is Jesus forewarning Peter of?
15. Verse 19, says this message of Jesus' to Peter signifies what?
16. Who are they speaking of when they say he leaned on Jesus breast at supper?
17. What question does Peter ask Jesus about John?
18. What did Jesus reply to Peter?
19. What saying went abroad among the brethren after Jesus' answer to Peter about John?
20. Whose concern is it what happened to John?
21. What broad statement did John say about Jesus in verse 25?
22. What was every word Jesus uttered on earth trying to do?
23. What does 1 John 5:7 say?