

John 21

IN GALILEE

This chapter is regarded by all modern critical scholars as an appendix to John's Gospel, probably written at a later date than the previous 20 chapters. The reason for this view is not that its subject matter or style is not in harmony with the preceding 20 chapters, but the closing verses of the preceding chapter seem to draw the book to a fitting close cf:

John 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Westcott says: "It is impossible to suppose that it was the original design of the Evangelist to add the incidents of chapter 21, after the verses which form a solemn close of his record of the great history.

"On the other hand it is equally clear that the chapter was written by the author of the Gospel. The style and general character of the language alike lead to this conclusion; and there is no evidence to show that the Gospel was published before the appendix was added to it. The reason of the addition is probably to be found in the circulation of the saying of the Lord to John in verse 23. (That John would not die)

Alford takes the same view, saying: "In every part of it his (John's) hand is plain and unmistakable; in every part of it his character and spirit are manifested in a way which none but the most biased can fail to recognize. I believe it to have been added some years, probably, after the completion of the Gospel; partly, perhaps, to record the important miracle of the second draught of fishes, so full of spiritual instruction, and the interesting account of the Lord's sayings to Peter; but principally to meet the error that was becoming prevalent concerning himself," referring to the saying that he should not die.

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*.

For some reason the Savior had desired to gather the whole band of his followers on the shores of Galilee, before His departure, and had directed them to meet Him in Galilee.

Matthew 28:7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

Mark 16:7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

There, after His resurrection, He was seen by the Twelve, and by about five hundred brethren at once cf:

I Corinthians 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

The apostles, having arrived at the appointed place, engaged in their old occupation of fishing, until they were interrupted by the appearance of the Savior.

We are not told how long "after these things" the appearance at the sea of Galilee occurred, and can only be certain that it occurred during the last thirty days of the period that preceded the ascension.

Sea of Tiberias is just another name for the sea of Galilee.

John, by the addition of this chapter, makes a record of both. There is a significance in the words, "Jesus showed himself," or that he manifested Himself after His resurrection, showing that he was visible only by a distinct act of his own will.

The same kind of language is applied to his appearances as is used of angels and all heavenly manifestations.

The risen Christ, though seen on many occasions by His disciples and on one occasion by hundreds of them, does not reveal Himself to His enemies. In His appearances to His disciples He leaves no doubt but that He is the risen Lord, yet there is a mystery, and an air of strangeness that inspires them with awe, and which restrains them from the former familiar worldly fellowship.

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.

Seven disciples are named, most of whom, and probably all, belonged to that very neighborhood. All that are named were apostles, unless Nathanael be an exception, who is only named in the first, second and last chapters of the Gospel.

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.

Peter here is true to the character portrayed in all the Gospels as well as Acts.

Peter was to become "fishers of men." They went from the house, possibly at Capernaum or Bethsaida, and fished at night, the most favorable time for fishing, but were unsuccessful. We may learn from the readiness with which the other disciples follow the example of Peter the importance of correct leadership. The multitude are led where leaders point out the way.

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 true reading, "When the day was breaking," gives a more vivid picture. At dawn they saw someone on the shore they did not yet recognize, either because of the indistinct light, or because of His changed appearance. In all the appearances after the resurrection the Lord was recognized or not as He desired.

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

The word translated "children" means, literally, "boys". "Boys, have you caught any fish?" There was nothing in His question that made the disciples suspect who He was. It would be natural for them to think that the inquiry was made by one wishing to purchase fish. The word "meat" is a general term applied to food of any kind.

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.

This direction was promptly followed. The command, itself, did not suggest to the disciples that it was Jesus. The *ship* was a small fishing boat, capable of carrying about a dozen men, such as are still seen on the waters of Galilee.

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.

As soon as the net was filled with this astonishing catch, John remembered a similar miracle, and yelled, It is the Lord! Peter, impulsive as usual, when he heard it, at once plunged into the sea. In a moment he was standing by the Lord. The rest of the disciples, less impulsive, came more slowly. It was 200 cubits, 100 yards to the shore, and they came in the boat, slowly dragging the net with its living load after them. We should admire the course of those disciples who continued faithful to the duty of that moment.

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.

The preparations were already begun for a simple meal. The commentators have discussed the origin of this fire. As we are not told we have to leave it to guess work. It might have been miraculous, or it might have been built by human hands. There were fish already broiling, but still, Christ bids them bring the fish just 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.

Peter, at the Master's command, springs back to duty and draws the net on the shore. The number of fish was carefully counted, one hundred and fifty-three large ones, and yet the net with such a strain, remained unbroken.

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.

The disciples knew that it was the Lord, but there was something in His demeanor, His majesty, His altered appearance, that filled them with awe, and prevented them from asking questions that they were curious to know. How many questions occur to us that we hesitate to ask! The Lord himself distributes the food to His disciples. He is the host; they are the guests.

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

John does not say that this was the *third appearance* of Jesus, but the third time he had showed himself to the *disciples*, or apostles. The first time was his appearance to the ten apostles, on the evening of the day of the resurrection:

John 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

The second was to the eleven (Thomas was now present) one week later:

John 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you.

The third is this appearance in Galilee. Besides these, he had appeared to Mary Magdalene:

John 20:16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

and to two disciples near Emmaus:

Luke 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs.

At this appearance He furnishes fire and food to them after a night of sleepless toil; an illustration of His tender care of His own.

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.

At the close of the feast the Lord turned to Peter with this question. On the night of the betrayal, when Christ announced that His disciples would forsake Him, Peter spoke up and asserted that what Christ had said might be true of the rest, but he was so loving, faithful and true, that he would die for him. Yet before the morning cock crow, he had thrice denied that he knew Jesus, even with oaths. Such was the collapse of the confident disciple. Christ had met with Peter among the rest of the disciples but had not referred to his denials.

Now is the time for a restoration of Peter. Christ's question would at once pierce Peter to the heart; his boastful claim, his awful fall. He no longer claims he is the truest. The word in Greek used by the Savior for "lovest" is *agapao* a very strong term; that used by Peter for "I love" is *phileo* a far less strong, because of his shameful denial. The Good Shepherd will still give Peter work to do as an under shepherd. He is to take care of the tender sheep or disciples of Christ.

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.

A second time the Lord probes Peter with the question. Let it be noted that he does not call him *Peter*, "the rock," any longer. So frail a disciple could only be called Simon. Again he uses the strong term for love (*agapao*). Again Peter answers as modestly as before. He can hardly claim to love, he can only claim "to have affection" (*phileo*). Then Christ again commissions him to work. He may watch over the disciples of the Lord, young and old.

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.

The third time the Lord asks the question, Jesus, Himself drops the strong term for love and uses the weaker one. Peter throws himself on the knowledge the Lord has of his heart. The questioning was painful, Peter was grieved, but the grief was wholesome and Peter's whole life after that bore proof of the discipline. His rashness was forever gone.

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, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not.

Peter had denied his Master to save his own life. Now that he is reinstated in the old confidence and charged with the Master's work, he is told that he will be called on to die for it. He will be girded, not with a girdle, but with bonds, unto death.

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.

These two verses can only be understood as declaring that Peter should die the death of a martyr. John wrote after Peter's death, that he did "glorify God."

The universal testimony of the ancient Church is that he did thus die.

It is asserted that Peter was crucified, a fact that is probable, as he was not a Roman citizen. He had once forsaken Christ through fear of death. Now, with a prospect of violent death before him, he is bidden to resume the Master's work and he did this, from this time, faithfully and gloriously, whether threatened by the Sanhedrin, in prison, or dying as a martyr on the cross. He is to taste the cup that his Master had drunk. The Lord emphasizes *action* to Peter, it is *waiting* that is made the special duty of John.

Of Peter, Augustine, commenting on this passage, says: "This denier and lover of Christ has revealed to him this end: puffed up by presumption, prostrated by the denial of the Master, purged of his sin by weeping penitence, once more approved by humble confession, he is at last crowned by suffering for Christ.

TARRY TILL I COME.

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*?

Three years before on the banks of the same sea, Jesus had called Peter and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee to become fishers of men by the very same words that he had now just addressed to Peter.

The latter, not unnaturally, thinks of his companions, and turning to look at John, asks: "Lord, what shall this man do?" By omitting the words in Italics the reader can catch the concise, to the point, form of the Greek: "Lord, this man, what?" Peter understands the prophecy with regard to himself, but what shall become of his friend?

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

Each one must work in the place where the Lord wills; Peter's duty was restless activity in following Christ, John's work in part at least, is calm, trustful and patient waiting. The prophecy was, therefore, yet unfulfilled, as far as he was concerned. The coming referred to was death. That they refer to the promised second coming of Christ, and that John did not die a natural death. About sixty years from the time that Christ spoke, John was an exile in Patmos. There, upon the Lord's day, he "heard a great voice," and turning, he says, "I saw one like the Son of Man" blazing with such glory that he fell, "fell at his feet as dead, and then he laid his right hand on me, saying to me, Fear not." It is, therefore, a historical fact that John did "tarry" on the earth long after the other apostles were wearing crowns of martyrdom, and until the Lord came to him visibly to make the last inspired revelation of His will to man. This view, which is the only one in which the Savior's words and the historical facts are in exact harmony, shows that Revelation was not written yet. Had that been the case he would not have been at loss to understand just what the Savior's words could mean, but would have referred at once to the wonderful "coming" he witnessed on Patmos.

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?

John corrects the mistake that had gone abroad. Christ had not said that he should not die, but simply, "tarry". John's language shows that he was uncertain what the Savior might mean. The scenes of Patmos are finally made clear.

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

The one named just before, concerning whom Peter asked the question.

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.

"Many other things" are recorded by the three preceding gospels which John does not record. The ministry of Christ was so busy, His teaching so voluminous and His deeds of mercy so numerous, that the verse states that it would be impossible to make a mi-nute record.

1 Corinthians 15:1-55 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

1Co 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

1Co 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

1Co 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

1 Corinthians 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

1Co 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

1Co 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

1Co 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

1Co 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

1Co 15:11 Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

1Co 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

1Co 15:13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

1Co 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain.

1Co 15:15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

1Co 15:16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

1Co 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

1Co 15:18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

1Co 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

1Co 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.

1Co 15:21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

1Co 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

1Co 15:24 Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

1Co 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

1Co 15:26 The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

1Co 15:27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

1Co 15:28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

1Co 15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

1Co 15:30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

1Co 15:31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

1Co 15:32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

1Co 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

1Co 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

1Co 15:35 But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

1Co 15:36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

1Co 15:37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*:

1Co 15:38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

1Co 15:39 All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is one kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds.

1Co 15:40 *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another.

1Co 15:41 *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory.

1Co 15:42 So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

1Co 15:43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

1Co 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.

1Co 15:46 Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

1Co 15:47 The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven.

1Co 15:48 As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.

1Co 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

1Co 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

1Co 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1Co 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

1Co 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

1Co 15:55 O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

Sources: KJV, e-Sword, Clarke's Commentary, and B.W. Johnson Commentary.