JOHN 21

Joh 21:1  After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

Joh 21:2  Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.

Joh 21:3  Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

* Sometime after Jesus appeared to Thomas and the Apostles, He appeared again in Galilee at the sea.
* Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two unnamed disciples were in Galilee at the time.
* Peter told the others he was going to go fishing.
* They decided they would go with Him.
* They fished all night but didn’t catch anything.

Joh 21:4  Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

Joh 21:5  Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.”

Joh 21:6  He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

Joh 21:7  That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.

Joh 21:8  The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

* They had been employed in fishing all night and when the sun started to rise Jesus came to the shoreline.
* The Apostles didn’t know it was Him.
  + This could have been due to the distance between the boat and shore (100 yards, verse 8).
  + Or it could have been another supernatural concealing of His identity.
* Jesus asked the Apostles if they had caught any fish.
* They responded, “No.”
* He told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat.
  + Why they took fishing advice from a random man on the shore isn’t clear.
  + Perhaps they thought, “Well, we’ve tried everything else tonight, might as well give it a try.”
* When they cast the net over the right side, it was filled with so many fish they couldn’t haul it back in.
* John immediately recognized the miracle and said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”
* Peter didn’t hang around to help his colleagues haul in the net, the text indicates he jumped into the sea and started towards the shore.
* The other Apostles brought the boat in from the sea dragging the huge load of fish behind them.
* APPLICATION:
  + This miracle shows Jesus’ absolute authority over His creation.
  + We would be wise to remember that and to ask for God’s help anytime we interaction with His natural world.
  + God can move the pieces of His creation around as He wills, to the benefit or detriment of our intentions.

Joh 21:9  When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

Joh 21:10  Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.”

Joh 21:11  So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.

* When everyone had come to shore, Jesus had prepared, seemingly miraculously, a fire and was cooking fish and bread on it.
* After counting the the bounty in their nets, the Apostles discovered they had a catch of 153 fish.
* There were so many fish yet their net remained in tact.
* The way John mentions this detail suggests Jesus may have miraculously kept the net from breaking.

Joh 21:12  Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.

Joh 21:13  Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

Joh 21:14  This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

* Jesus invited the Apostles to eat breakfast with Him.
* There was no question in any of their minds that it was Jesus.
* Jesus sitting and eating with them would have been another evidence of His bodily resurrection.
* The fact that the Apostles didn’t initially recognize Jesus on the shore tells us they weren’t overly zealous to claim they had seen the risen Lord.
* They believed it was Jesus only after seeing supernatural evidence (the school of fish in the net).
* John and the other gospel writers are somewhat self-deprecating when describing their response to Jesus’ crucifixion and the initial claims of the resurrection.
  + They thought everything had fallen apart when Jesus died.
  + They didn’t believe the initial reports of the resurrection.
* They were convinced by evidence, not by wishful thinking.
* If the “risen lord” had been a fraud, the Apostles would have been the first to recognize him as a phony, but after eating breakfast and talking with Jesus they were all convinced they were talking to their old friend.
* In verse 14, John tells his readers this was the 3rd time Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection.
  + John is referring to Jesus’ appearances to the disciples as a group.
    - Jesus appeared to the disciples the night of His resurrection.
    - He then appeared to them eight days later when Thomas was present.
    - This appearance at the Sea of Galilee was the third time the disciples saw Him as a group.
  + There were other appearances to disciples but only as individuals or pairs.
    - Jesus appeared to 2 disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24).
    - Jesus made an appearance to Peter (Luke 24:34).

Joh 21:15  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, “Feed my lambs.”

Joh 21:16  He said to him 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, “Tend my sheep.”

Joh 21:17  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 everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

* Jesus turned to Peter and asked him the same question three times, why?
  + Can you think of anything Peter did three times.
  + Peter denied Jesus three times and now Jesus gives him three opportunities to reaffirm his love.
* Jesus asks Peter “…do you love me more than these” (verse 15)?
  + Who or what are “these”?
  + Those who know Greek say the object of this pronoun is not immediately obvious from the grammar.
  + I think we have two possibilities:
    - Jesus may be referring to the items of Peter’s occupation.
      * The fish.
      * The nets.
      * The boats.
      * Jesus may be asking if He means more to Peter than the physical items he valued.
    - Jesus may be referring to the other Apostles.
      * Do you remember when Peter told the Lord his faith and love were greater than those of the other Apostles?
      * Mat 26:33  Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”
      * Peter said this just before Jesus was arrested and he denied Him.
      * Jesus may have been alluding back to those words when asking Peter if he loved Him.
  + If the second possibility is the correct one, Peter’s answers shows tones of humility.
    - He doesn’t mention the other Apostles, he only tells Jesus, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”
    - He confidently affirms his love.
    - APPLICATION:
      * You have to love Peter’s heart!
      * Even after making a mistake, he looked Jesus in eye and said, “Lord, you know I love you.”
      * You have to be pretty confident about the state of your heart to say to God, “You know I love you.”
      * We should all be that confident.
      * If you can’t affirm your love for God that boldly you should figure out why and fix it.
      * What is your heart attached to that is keeping it from being fully given to God.
    - APPLICATION:
      * Making mistakes doesn’t separate you from the love of God.
      * Jesus didn’t stop loving Peter when he denied Him.
* Jesus then told Peter to feed His lambs.
  + Jesus returns to the picture of Him as the Good Shepherd (John 10).
  + Jesus cares for His flock and wants Peter to play a part in that work.
  + The lambs of the flock would be young believers, those who had recently come to faith in Jesus, and those who would shortly come to faith when the Apostles opened the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven in Acts 2 on Pentecost.
  + In light of Peter’s love, Jesus calls him to a greater work than fishing.
* Jesus asks Peter this same question 2 more times.
* The third time, the text says Peter was grieved and responded, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”
  + Three times Jesus pokes at Peter’s wound.
  + APPLICATION:
    - Sometimes repentance and restoration are uncomfortable.
    - It isn’t always enjoyable going through the process of fixing your mistakes and reconciling relationships.
    - Sometimes you just want to bury something you did in the past and you want everyone to leave it in the past too.
    - Peter may have seen what Jesus was doing by asking Him three times.
    - It would have been an uncomfortable reminder to Peter.
    - There may be times we have to face uncomfortable reminders of our sins to make things right.
    - Jesus calls us to face our failures head on and then set our eyes on the work He has set out for us.
* Jesus *doesn’t* ask “are you sorry?” nor “will you promise never to do that again?” “Jesus Christ asks each one of us, not for obedience primarily, not for repentance, not for vows, not for conduct, but for a *heart*; and that being given, all the rest will follow.” (Maclaren)
* APPLICATION:
  + God can make us better people through our mistakes.
  + Obviously, God doesn’t want us to sin.
  + But when we do, God can bring us through those mistakes and refine us in the process.
  + Peter was a better man on the other side of his failure.
* APPLICATION:
  + Jesus’ doesn’t make His grace difficult to obtain.
  + Jesus doesn’t ask for some elaborate show penance.
  + He didn’t require Peter to do some great task to earn forgiveness.
  + He just asked Peter to give Him his heart and care for those He loved.
  + It isn’t hard to become a Christian and receive God’s grace.

Joh 21:18  Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.”

Joh 21:19  (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

* If we didn’t have verse 19 and the records of secular history, verse 18 would seem pretty abstract to me.
* Jesus contrasts Peter’s youth to his future old age.
  + In his youth, Peter had freedom.
  + But in his old age, his freedom would be taken from him.
  + Jesus tells him his arms will be stretched out and he will be taken where he does not want to go.
* If that was all the information we were given it would be a struggle to interpret the verse.
* But verse 19 tells us Jesus was talking about the kind of death Peter would die to glorify God.
  + In his old age, Peter would be bound up, arrested and carried off to prison.
  + Secular history tells us Peter was crucified (which would explain the stretched out hands).
* This statement from Jesus must have been simultaneously terrifying and comforting to Peter.
  + It would be scary to know you were going to die at the hands of persecutors.
  + It would be comforting to know your death would glorify God.
* Immediately after telling Peter about his future death in God’s service, Jesus calls Peter to follow Him.
  + Jesus hadn’t changed.
  + He didn’t sugar coat His message to His listeners before His death and He didn’t change His tone after His death.
  + His message was “count the cost!”
    - APPLICATION:
      * It isn’t hard to become a Christians but you need to know the level of commitment Jesus requires before doing it.
      * Giving your heart entirely to God isn’t an easy thing to do, especially over a long period of time.
      * Sacrifices have to be made… sometimes serious sacrifices.
      * That’s what Jesus was asking of Peter.
* Back in Matthew 26:35, before the crucifixion, Peter said to Jesus, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!”
  + Peter didn’t live up to those words on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion.
  + But he did live up to them on the day of his crucifixion.

Joh 21:20  Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?”

Joh 21:21  When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?”

Joh 21:22  Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!”

Joh 21:23  So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”

* Peter’s reaction to Jesus’ statement about his future isn’t recorded but you have to imagine it had a pretty big impact on him.
* When he had taken it in, he turned and saw John and asked Jesus “Lord, what about this man?”
* This would be a pretty natural question for any curious mind.
* But Jesus wasn’t talking about John, He was focused on Peter.
* In regards to John, Jesus said, “If I want him to remain alive until my second coming, it isn’t your business to know. You follow me.”
* APPLICATION:
  + It is natural for us to be curious about what God is doing with other people.
  + How God is going to use them.
  + God has a lot of plans for all kinds of people but that isn’t for us to know.
  + Rather than spending our time busying ourselves with curiosities about others, we would be better off working the work God has given us.
* Even though Jesus said “IF it is my will that John remain until I come…” a rumor started in the early church that John wasn’t going to die until Jesus came back.
  + This rumor probably gained steam when John outlived all the other Apostles.
  + History suggests John didn’t die until the 90s AD which would almost certainly put him in his 80s or 90s at the time of his death.
  + This would have been very old for a 1st century Jew.
  + The rumor wasn’t true and John eventually died and went to be with the Lord he loved so much.

Joh 21:24  This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Joh 21:25  Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

* Just as John did in John 19:35, he here reaffirms the truth of his witness.
* He was an eye and ear witness of the things written in his book.
* Many of the disciples would have been able to testify to John’s proximity to Jesus.
* John had spent three years with Jesus and could have written a massive volume on His life, His teaching, and His character.
* Instead he chose to record this short volume so those who are not privileged to walk with Jesus can believe.
* John made himself a servant to the world by lending his eyes and ears for the benefit of billions.
* He who has ears to hear, let him hear!