

“YOU...FOLLOW ME!”**Read John 21.1-25****I / INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS / SETTING THE CONTEXT**

1/ We have come now to the concluding chapter of John’s Gospel account and also the last lesson of this brief summary/survey we have been in for these past weeks. As always, there is so much more here than we can even point out and note – much less delve into and dwell on. This chapter is so deep and so rich with instructive lessons and personal encouragements – it being Jesus’ last and final appearance [at least that John records for his purposes] before Jesus physically departs from them and ascends back to the Glory of the Father that He had with Him before the world began [see ch 17.4-5].

2/ So all we can hope to do here in this brief lesson is to point out what we believe are John’s main, specific, and most prominent purposes for recording this encounter and the acts and conversations that transpired during it...

[1] What we do know is that John is continuing with his accounting of several appearances Jesus made to His disciples following His resurrection and before His ascension [see Lesson 19].

[2] Jesus is giving undeniable and incontrovertible evidences and proofs of His real resurrection [see 1 Corinthians 15.1-7; Acts 1.3]. In fact, Peter must have referred to this specific encounter when he testified at the house of Cornelius: **...but God raised Him on the third day and made Him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead [Acts 10.40-41].**

[3] Jesus specifically arranged this encounter for Peter’s sake – to restore him, recall him, reset him for the work He had planned and given him to do in the days following for the rest of his life [see vv 15-19].

[4] Jesus also will give to Peter, the other disciples who were present, and to all of His followers in the succeeding ages and generations His charge for the work we all must faithfully discharge as we await His coming again – which will be summed up in the words I have chosen for the focus of this lesson: **“You...follow Me!” [v 22].**

[5] There are also numerous practical lessons which Jesus teaches these disciples – and continue to apply to us: how we must depend upon Him for the work He has called and given us to do ... and how that we cannot fail and must succeed in it if we will but follow, obey, and trust Him in all we do.

II / vv 1-2 / “...Jesus revealed Himself again...”

1/ John is obviously following up on yet more appearances Jesus made to His disciples following His resurrection – not only to give them undeniable evidence and proof that He had risen from the dead, but also to give them essential instructions and training for the work He would commission them to do after His ascension. John writes ‘**After this Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples**’ to follow up on all the visual appearances he chronicled in ch 20.

2/ John will come back to this purpose and theme in v 14: **This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.** Not that this was only the ‘third’ appearance that Jesus made to them [He made several appearances more than just three on that first day of His resurrection], but that this was the ‘third’ day of Jesus’ making appearances that John records.

3/ AND the fact that He made this appearance in the presence of these seven disciples [five others besides the principals of the event, Peter and John], shows us that He wanted witnesses there to corroborate the important lessons He wanted to teach them. They would be fellow eyewitnesses that these events really happened as John will record them.

4/ What Jesus **revealed** about Himself was not only His living, physical Presence, but also His Glory. He will **reveal** His Glory in the miraculous acts He performed in their sight during this encounter.

5/ **This appearance was pre-planned and intentional. See Matthew 28.7, 10 and Mark 16.7.**

6/ **...by the Sea of Tiberias.** This is the same Sea of Galilee or Lake Gennesaret, as it is sometimes called by the other Gospels. Just by being here in this place, the minds of the disciples would be flooded and refreshed with all the memories they had of what Jesus had done at this very site: He had called several of them in this company at the first to follow Him; He had fed the 5000 on these shores; He had walked on these same waters to come to them during another storm; He had stilled the waves and shut down the storm here; He had miraculously provided for them a huge catch of fish on another occasion like this one; on the high grounds surrounding these same waters, He had cast out demons and allowed them to enter the herd of swine; He had delivered messages and parables while sitting in a boat here – and on and on. You have to know these disciples were remembering and rehearsing all these memories as they went to fish that night.

7/ There were yet more lessons to be learned here this day also ... and memories that would encourage and empower them to follow, obey, and trust Jesus in the days ahead. In their writings that would follow, we can find numerous references to this encounter and revelation of Jesus' Glory.

III / vv 3-8 / “It is the LORD!”

1/ **“I am going fishing... We will go with you.”** We may not need to blame or fault them for going fishing. They were poor. While they had walked with Jesus, they were largely dependent upon the good-will offerings from other followers to provide for their needs [see **Luke 8.1-3**]. Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with His Promised Power before they went out to witness for Him. So they had to provide for themselves. They knew how to fish. Andrew and Peter, and James and John had been partners in the fishing business when Jesus first called them to leave their nets and come to follow Him.

2/ **...but that night, they caught nothing.** This was a lesson they needed to learn...they must learn. This was a reiteration and real-life re-enactment of what Jesus had preached to them in His Farewell Discourse in **ch 15.5: ...for apart from Me you can do nothing.** Regardless of what you do, or how long you have done it, or how many times you have done it, or how skilled, learned, expert, or experienced you are at doing it, or even how well you can teach and train someone else to do the same thing – if Jesus Christ is not doing it through you and making it work, you can't do it and it won't work through your own wisdom, strength, and experience.

3/ **‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’** More than all the other experiences they had had with Jesus on this Sea of Galilee, none were so powerful, pointed, and poignant as the event recorded in **Luke 5.4-8**. It happened exactly like it just did here. Same cast of characters. Same instructions. Jesus evidenced and demonstrated His Deity, Glory, omniscience, omnipotence, and Grace. They were struck with awe and faith in that instance – and they are this time also. ***If we ever enjoy any success at all in whatever Jesus calls and gives us to do, it will be because we are willing to listen to His every word and act on it with humble faith and simple obedience.***

4/ **‘It is the LORD!’** John immediately recognized Him first. Peter then heard, recognized, and responded by throwing his outer garment clothing back on and jumping into the water to get to the shore. The other disciples followed suit, bringing in the fishing boat as close as they could get it, and perhaps even off-loading the net full of fish into a smaller skiff to drag their generous catch to land.

IV / vv 9-14 / “Come and have breakfast”

1/ Surely there are some miracles going on here: first, the sudden ‘appearance’ of Jesus on the shore [does this not sound like His appearances He made in **ch 20** inside the locked and bolted rooms where they were hiding out in fear?]; and now, Jesus has already prepared **a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.** Yes, we know, He could have walked there from wherever He was before, brought these things with Him, and get them laid out before He called out to them. But, He also could have used His powers of creation to bring them into being with His will and word of command. [He had done this before when He created enough fish and bread to feed 5000+ people / **ch 6**.]

2/ BTW, this word for ‘charcoal fire’ [or ‘fire of coals’ KJV] is found in the NT only two times: here and can you guess where the other reference is? **ch 18.18: Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.** More memories, especially for Simon Peter. And not so pleasant ones. You can see where this is going... more to come... *Kinda like a restorative deja vu.*

3/ **Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.”** Jesus doesn’t ‘need’ us to do anything ... as in ‘He couldn’t do it without us.’ [*Sometimes we think...*] He has just demonstrated that singular creative power of Deity and omnipotence. But He graciously brings us into His Kingdom work by telling us what we need to do, how to do it, giving us the needed strength, power, and resources to do it [as we obey Him], and then He asks us to bring the contribution of our labors to His table!

4/ Surely this is at least something of what Paul meant when he said: **For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.** It ought to humble us, and at the same time, fill us with hope and joy, that Christ will **work in [us], both to will and to work for His good pleasure / Philippians 2.13.**

5/ **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.** I don’t think any one of us knows the significance of being so specific with the exact number of ‘large fish’ [‘keepers’], except to point out that God ‘sweats the details.’ He who knows the number of all the stars and calls them all by name; He who counts and knows the numbers of the hairs on our heads; He who keeps track of the lighting and flying off of the sparrows – He knows and cares for and provides for our every need. We can trust Him, confide in Him, and cast all our burdens and cares on Him. He will care for and provide for us.

6/ Jesus not only provided this breakfast meal for them, not only asked them to contribute to it [‘potluck by Galilee’?], but He sat down with them and ate and drank with them in their presence. They enjoyed a good social meal of fellowship and conversation together. He gives us an example and permission to do the same with one another! [see Acts 2.44-46]

V / vv 15-19 / “Do you love Me?”

1/ And now we come to the main event of this post-resurrection encounter: Jesus wants to have a word with Simon Peter. Keep in mind that Jesus had not only pre-planned this encounter [see again **Matthew 28.7, 10 & Mark 16.7**], but in those same instructions to the women witnesses, the angel specifically said [from Jesus Himself] ‘...**but go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.**’ And so we know that Jesus had future and further plans for Peter following his denials of the Lord that Peter knew nothing about. *Wonder what he thought about this ‘heads-up’ when he was told that Jesus specifically wanted to see him?*

2/ But of course, we know that Jesus’ plan was not only to show His forgiveness of Peter’s failure, but also to restore him to the place of leadership He had given him among the disciples. ***We should be so glad that Jesus’ Grace is not only saving...but restorative also!*** We all need it.

3/ I want to bring this home to our own consciences and experiences. Every one of us can identify with Simon Peter. We have all failed, disappointed, and grieved our Lord on multiple occasions and in many ways [see **Luke 22.60-62**]. **Jesus is calling Peter back into His service and usefulness to Him – and He is calling you and me as well!**

4/ So let’s see how Jesus restores Simon Peter, not only in His usefulness to Christ, but also in Peter’s own conscience...

[1] Jesus probes Peter’s heart and soul with this ‘bottom-line’ question: **Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?** Three times, Jesus will ask Peter: **Do you love Me?** We think that the reason Jesus asked Peter ‘**more than these**’ this first time is because Peter had arrogantly boasted in the upper room, ‘**Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you!**’ [John 13.37] and ‘**Even though they all fall away, I will not ... If I must die with you, I will not deny you**’ [Mark 14.27-31]. So now, Jesus graciously confronts and gently reminds Peter of his self-confident boasting. ***The truest test of our devotion and faithfulness to Jesus Christ is whether we truly love Him. “Lovest***

thou Me?’ may seem at first sight a simple question. In one sense it is so. Even a child can understand love, and can say whether he loves another or not. Yet ‘Lovest thou Me?’ is, in reality, a very searching question. We may know much, and do much, and profess much, and talk much, and work much, and give much, and go through much, and make much show in our religion, and yet be dead before God from want of love, and at last go down to the pit. Do we love Christ? That is the great question. Without this there is no vitality about our Christianity. We are no better than painted wax figures, lifeless stuffed beasts in a museum, sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. There is no life where there is no love.” ~Pastor J. C. Ryle

[2] Peter responds sincerely and truly that ‘Yes!’ he does love Jesus! Even with all his faults, flaws, foibles, and failures, he does love Jesus! And, Jesus, who knows all things, knows that he does! *Again, Pastor Ryle: “The answer that the humbled Apostle gave is the one account that the true servant of Christ in every age can give of his religion [true faith in Christ]. Such an one may be weak, and fearful, and ignorant, and unstable, and failing in many things, but at any rate he is real and sincere ... Our knowledge of doctrines may be defective. Our ability to defend our views in argument may be small. But we cannot be prevented feeling. And our feeling will be like that of the Apostle Peter: ‘Thou, Lord, who knowest all things, Thou knowest my heart; and Thou knowest that I love Thee.’”*

[3] Then Jesus recalls Peter back to service – re-commissions him to return to Christ with all his heart and commit himself to serving Christ the ways He gives him to serve: ‘**Feed My lambs ... Shepherd My sheep ... Feed My sheep.**’ *Pastor Ryle one more time: “...usefulness to others is the grand test of love, and working for Christ the great proof of really loving Christ. It is not loud talk and high profession; it is not even impetuous, spasmodic zeal, and readiness to draw the sword and fight – it is steady, patient, laborious effort to do good to Christ’s sheep scattered throughout this sinful world, which is the best evidence of being a true-hearted disciple. This is the real secret of Christian greatness ... It is not for nothing we may be sure, that we find these things recorded for our learning just before He left the world. Let us aim at a loving, doing, useful, hard-working, unselfish, kind, unpretentious religion. Let it be our daily desire to think of others, care for others, do good to others, and lessen the sorrow, and increase the joy of this sinful world.”*

5/ Jesus concludes this restorative intervention session with an announcement to Peter concerning how he would serve and glorify Christ to the end of his life – and even by the death of martyrdom he would suffer for the cause of Christ / vv 18-19.

6/ **And with this final charge, “Follow Me!”** we come to the final lesson we all must learn...

VI / vv 20-25 / “YOU...FOLLOW ME!”

1/ It would appear that perhaps Jesus had begun to move away, and Peter had begun moving with Him to follow Him ... when Peter then turned to see that John was still standing there, and Jesus had not personally addressed him: **‘Lord, what about this man?’**

2/ At this point, I want to ask every one of us three probing questions: [1] *Where have you been in your walk with Christ [over your lifetime and recent experiences]?* [2] *Where are you now?* [3] *Where do you go from here?*

3/ Let us all learn: [1] Jesus Christ has the sole and exclusive authority, control, and Lordship over your life; [2] Jesus Christ ‘assigns’ to each of us where He wants us to go and what He wants us to do wherever He leads us to serve Him ... and that role and the place where we fulfill it can and will change at His discretion – wherever and however He chooses for us to serve His purposes and pleasure; [3] Our only response and responsibility is **“YOU...FOLLOW ME!”** We want to choose our own places, roles, and ways to serve Christ. He not only knows what He wants for us, but He knows what’s best for us. [4] Whatever He chooses for someone else to be or do is not our responsibility nor the measure by which we judge the value or worth of our service – **“YOU [place your name here], FOLLOW ME!”**

DO YOU BELIEVE? AND ARE YOU FOLLOWING JESUS?