

John 21 - Appearance in Galilee; Disciple's Fishing; Peter's Restoration and Commission

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John 21

(d) 7th Appearance: To seven disciples (21:1-14)

(i) The characters (21:1-2)

1 After these things Jesus **revealed** Himself again to the disciples at the **Sea of Tiberias**, and He **revealed** *Himself* in this way:

1 After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested *Himself* in this way.

1 Later on, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is what happened:

1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself.

- "...revealed" [2x] - *phareroō*, manifested (Cf. 1:31; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6, et al); in 2:11 this word is used to describe Jesus manifesting/revealing His glory after He turned the water to wine in Cana

— Jesus continually manifested/revealed Himself to the disciples, through signs and wonders, for the purpose of increasing their faith, because they would be the carriers of the gospel to the lost world in a short time. Jesus will ascend back to the Father, but the work that the Father entrusted to the Son must be carried on.

— Because without faith you cannot please God (Heb 11:6), Jesus wanted to build up and fortify the disciples faith through the signs that He performed

- "...Sea of Tiberias" - the Sea of Galilee (Cf. 6:1)

2 Simon Peter, Thomas who was called Didymus, Nathanael of **Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee**, and two others of His disciples were together.

2 Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two of his other disciples were together.

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.

- "...Cana in Galilee" - reminds us of the location of the first two signs presented in John's Gospel: changing water to wine (2:11) and healing the official's son (4:46-54), both of which were performed in Cana

- "...the *sons* of Zebedee" - James and John, the author of this Gospel

- Seven disciples total, three were named, the two sons of Zebedee, and two were anonymous
- Why is John so detailed here describing how was present? Because this is what you would expect from an eyewitness (1:14; 19:35; 21:24). John was there, so he can recount minor details that others who heard about this story second hand could not account for.

(ii) The consternation (21:3)

3 Simon Peter *said to them, "I am going fishing." They *said to him, "We are also coming with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that **night they caught nothing**.

3 Simon Peter *said to them, "I am going fishing." They *said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

3 Simon Peter told them, "I'm going fishing."

They all told him, "We'll go with you, too." So they went out and got into the boat but didn't catch a thing that night.

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.

- During times of trial and upheaval, people tend to retreat back to what they know, what they are comfortable doing. In this case, Peter and the other six disciples (21:2), went fishing.

— It's important to understand, in order to interpret and apply the lessons from this chapter properly, that by going back fishing, Peter is operating from the natural, in the area of his strength.

— Throughout John's Gospel, as well as the synoptics, Jesus has been breaking Peter down, bringing event after event into Peter's life in order so that he could flame out and fail in order to empty him of his self confidence:

- Sea of Galilee (Matt 14:28-33) - Peter initially walked on water, but when He took his eyes off of Jesus and worried about the wind, he sank
- Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:21-23) - after Peter's confession of Christ, Jesus began to detail the need for Him to die; Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him, becoming a snare in Jesus' mission of the cross.
- Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:10-11) - Peter got violent at Jesus' arrest, swinging a sword and cutting off the ear of a man named Malchus
- Jerusalem (John 13:36-38; 18:17,25-27) - Peter showed tremendous self confidence in the Upper Room, stating emphatically that he would never deny the Lord. Just hours later, Peter denied Him three times.
- Jesus now allows Peter to fail one last time, the breaking process for Peter is almost over. Jesus allows Peter to fail here in his vocation, in his training, in what he is good at: fishing.

— Jesus said in the Upper Room (15:5): **I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.** Peter no doubt understood this intellectually, but he didn't yet understand it experientially. None of us can understand this experientially until we go through successive failures. Each failure is designed by God to weaken our self reliance and strengthen our dependence and reliance on Him (Cf. 2 Cor 3:5).

— It wasn't just Peter who will go through God's breaking process here, it's the other six disciples with him. While they didn't become as prominent as Peter did in Acts, they had important ministries in the gospel nonetheless (Eph 2:20), and they need to learn the same lesson that God was teaching Peter.

- "...night" - they fished all night, in the darkness

— In John's Gospel, darkness means nighttime, but it also refers to spiritual darkness (Cf. 3:2; 13:30). The darkness is mentioned here because the disciples are in the dark regarding a spiritual issue, and as day breaks and the sun comes up (21:4), Jesus will enlighten them on this issue.

- "...they caught nothing" - they fished all night and the professional fisherman, Peter, caught nothing. Epic failure!

(iii) The call (21:4-5)

4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

4 Just as dawn was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore. The disciples didn't realize it was Jesus.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

- "...day was now breaking" - not just physical daytime, but spiritual enlightenment or illumination. As the day was breaking, they were about to receive insight from Christ.

- "...the disciples did not know that it was Jesus" - the disciples didn't recognize Him maybe because they were too far away, or maybe the sun hadn't risen yet and there wasn't enough light

— It's likely that His appearance had been altered somewhat because He was now in a resurrected form. When the disciples or others saw Jesus post-resurrection, they often didn't realize it was Him right away (20:15; Luke 24:16).

5 So Jesus *said to them, **"Children, you do not have any fish to eat, do you?"** They answered Him, "No."

5 So Jesus *said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No."

5 Jesus asked them, "Children, you don't have any fish, do you?" They answered him, "No."

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

- "...Children" - *paidion*, a young child, a lad; it could also be a metaphor for someone who is like a child in intellect; "boys still under instruction"

— Jesus likely calls them by this title because they had not yet progressed into spiritual adulthood because they had not yet mastered one of the most basic, rudimentary spiritual truths (John 15:5): Without Me, you can do nothing.

— Until a person not just intellectually understands this, but begins to live it out experientially, they will remain a spiritual "child" and not be able to mature into spiritual adulthood/maturity.

— Fact of the matter is, we have Christians at all levels of spiritual maturity in the body of Christ today. In 1 John 2:13-14, John addresses his readers as believers, but then goes on to call them by three separate designations: children, young men, and fathers. What moves a Christian from a child to a young man, and eventually to a father? The walk of the believer in the spiritual life.

— A person's spiritual designation has little to do with age; our spiritual maturity relates more to our moment by moment dependence upon the resources of God as we walk out the Christian life. As long as we are living out the Christian life under our own power, scheming, and manipulation, we have not yet progressed into young adulthood, and certainly not into fatherhood.

— How we live out Gal 5:16 ("walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh") has a large effect on how the Lord looks at our level of maturity.

- "...you do not have any fish to eat, do you?" - this question in the Greek demands a negative answer

— Jesus knew they didn't catch any fish. The question was for the disciple's benefit, not because Jesus was curious about their catch or lack of one.

— Jesus put them into a situation where they had to acknowledge their defeat and humiliation. This is part of the breaking process of God, as He pushes us toward collapse in order to break us of our self reliance and move us toward dependence upon Him.

(iv) The command (21:6a)

(v) The catch (21:6b)

6 And He said to them, "**Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find the fish.**" **So they cast it**, and then they were not able **to haul** it in because of **the great quantity of fish**.

6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

6 He told them, "Throw the net on the right hand side of the boat, and you'll catch some." So they threw it out and were unable to haul it in because it was so full of fish.

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.

- "...Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat" - Jesus gives them a command that was humiliating and ridiculous at the same time...what difference would it make if they cast the net on the other side of the boat?

— In the minds of these professional fisherman, none at all. They must have thought this was the most ridiculous suggestion, from a carpenter not a fisherman, they had ever heard. In their minds, they must have been thinking, Geez, we know Jesus is the Messiah and all that, but He obviously doesn't know a thing about fishing.

— Jesus question is a test...He is testing them to see if they were going to be obedient, despite the powerful presence of pride. Would they trust the Lord is a small thing like this, when the whole thing seemed absurd? Or, was their (Peter's) pride so strong that they wouldn't follow through on a very simple request?

— The great lesson here is that when we break through the barrier of pride, and simply do what the Lord asks us to do, despite the fact that many of the things He asks us to do are beyond human comprehension. When we do this, we find that there is manifold fruit.

— Notice the fruit/blessing does not come from the ability of these men, but from their capacity to fulfill certain simple (and sometimes humiliating) commands of God. The blessing comes through humble obedience.

- This is often how God works with us...remember the story of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-14). He was very successful in everything he did, but he was a leper. He came to Elijah for healing, knocked on the door, but Elijah didn't even come out to see him. He just sent word for him to dip himself in the Jordan River 7x. Naaman was furious, but those with him talked sense into him, he followed Elijah's simple instructions, and he was healed.

— It's a crisis of our will, of our pride, that the Lord is trying to wrench out of us. Sometimes the solution the Lord gives us is so simple that our human pride gets in our way of obedience. We want the Lord to work a certain way in our lives, but we need to allow God to be God and we just be man, and submit our will and our pride to Him in full dependence.

- How is Peter ever going to reach the point in his life where he preaches a sermon, and 3000 people put their faith in Christ? To reach that point, he has to get into the habit of obeying God in everything, listening to the Spirit of God consistently, even when he doesn't understand what the Spirit is doing. Simple humble obedience is what God requires, then you will be that branch in the vine that bears much fruit.

- "...So they cast *it*" - humble obedience, even when they didn't understand or Jesus' command didn't make much sense for the situation
- Jesus had done the same type miracle back at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 5:4-7). Peter, James and John were on the boat during that event, and were on the boat again here. That was event #35 in Jesus' ministry; the event described here is event #182.
- So Jesus has been hammering away at these disciples that they reached back in their memory bank and thought, Jesus has a pretty good record of fishing, so let's go ahead and do what He says, even though it makes no sense.
- God worked the same way through Abraham...he was saved in Gen 15:6, then 20 years later, after God had fulfilled His promise to give him a son, then He asked Abraham to sacrifice his son (Gen 22). Yet Abraham was willing to obey a command of God that appeared totally irrational. It took God 20 years to get Abraham to that point.
- This is what God is doing in our lives today...event after event keeps happening to you and you don't understand why. He's getting you to the point of dependency on Him, because He has something He wants to bring forth in your future. Yet stubbornness, self will, self sufficiency, pride, an 'I'm going to do it my way' mentality gets right in the way.
- You want to know why churches and ministries collapse or fold all the time? Because you have people in leadership who don't understand this principle. It's not that their not saved, it's that they haven't allowed God to recalibrate their mind the way God wants to recalibrate it or renew it.
- We bring so much baggage from our old nature involving pride that God needs to reprogram in us before He can use us. If we do not allow God to reprogram us and we seek to carry out the will of God and the work of God through human power, we go nowhere.
- "...to haul" - *helkyō*, to drag or pull in, with resistance; the same Greek word used for God's "drawing" of people to Christ (6:44; Cf. 12:42)
- "...the great quantity of fish" - Peter finally learned this lesson...he overcame the crisis of pride in his life, and simply and humbly obeyed Jesus. He shifted the nets from port to starboard, and what were the results?
- These type of results do not result from human manipulation and scheming...they only happen through God. God wants to work with us and use us, but we need to be pliable and dependable.

(vi) The comprehension (21:7)

- 7 Therefore **that disciple whom Jesus loved** *said to Peter, "**It is the Lord!**" So 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.
- 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved *said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped *for work*),

and threw himself into the sea.

7 That disciple whom Jesus kept loving told Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his clothes back on, because he was practically naked, and jumped into the sea.

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.

- The massive catch of fish leads to the disciple's comprehension

- "...that disciple whom Jesus loved" - John never mentions himself by name in his Gospel, in order to keep the laser focus on Christ alone (Cf. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20)

- "...It is the Lord!" - evidently John could now see and decipher who was speaking with them, and he identified Jesus by His title, who He is: "Lord"

- That is the purpose of these miracles: to inculcate faith (20:30-31)

- "...for he was stripped *for work*" - in that day, men would typically remove their outer garment to work, leaving only their inner garments. Peter here, finished with his work, put on his outer garment and jumped into the sea to swim to Jesus.

- *Normally people take unnecessary clothing off before going swimming. Peter's somewhat irrational behavior seems to be another indication of his strong desire to get to Jesus quickly. He was again demonstrating his characteristic extravagant loyalty to the Lord.* [Constable]

- Do I have Peter's extravagant loyalty to the Lord? Can I not wait to get into the presence of the Lord, to worship Him, to study His Word? Or are these things I do when I have to or when I have nothing better to do?

(vii) The coals (21:8-9)

8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits away, dragging the net *full* of fish.

8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net *full* of fish.

8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. They were only about 200 cubits away from the shore.

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.

- John gives us so much detail here, which is not germane to the story or application itself, in order to give evidence that he was there and saw these things (1 John 1:1). Some 60 years later, he remembers all these details, with the help/inspiration of the Holy Spirit bring things back to his remembrance.

— It's one thing to lie, it's another thing altogether to die for a lie. John went to his grave professing these things to be true, thus John is a very credible eyewitness to the things that he saw.

9 So when they got out on the land, they *saw **a charcoal fire** *already* made and fish placed on it, and bread.

9 So when they got out on the land, they *saw a charcoal fire *already* laid and fish placed on it, and bread.

9 When they arrived at the shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish lying on it, and some bread.

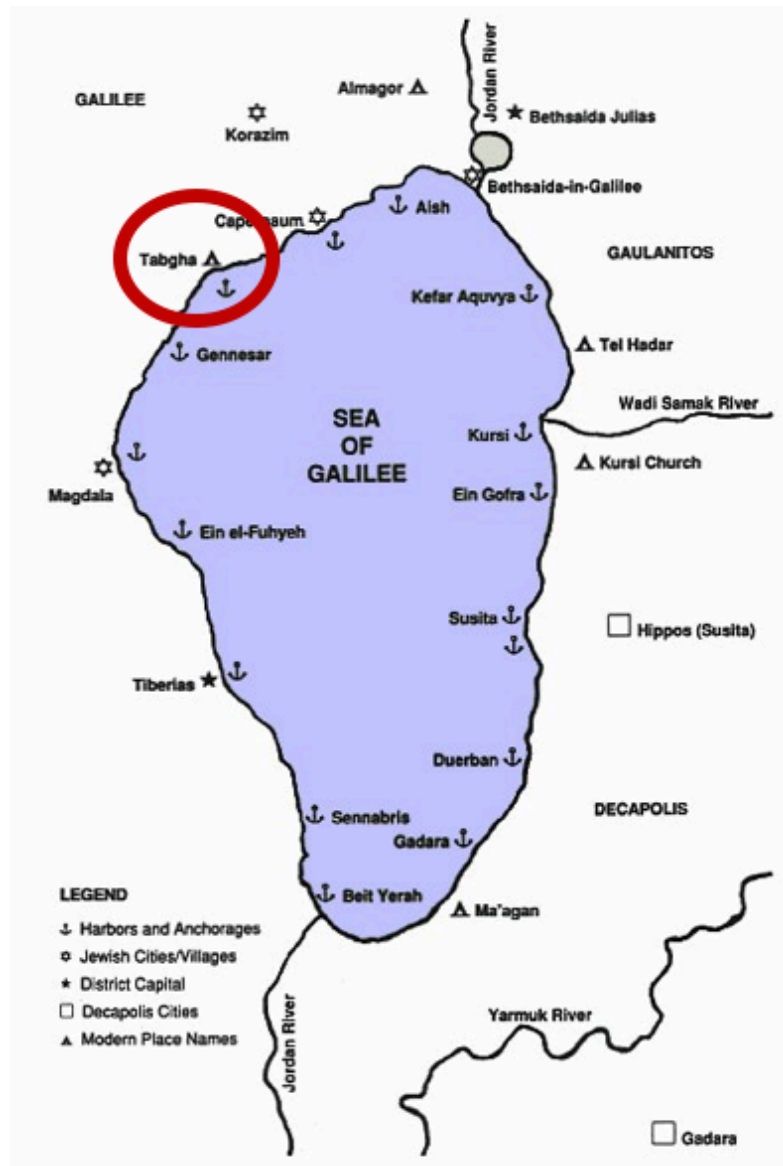
9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

- "...a charcoal fire" - interesting that in the courtyard where Peter was during Jesus' Jewish trials before Annas and Caiaphas, Peter was standing next to a charcoal fire when he denied Christ (Cf. 18:18)

— It's also interesting that now as Jesus begins to restore Peter (21:15-17), He does so in the same setting as when Peter denied Him 3x

— Notice also that when Jesus restores Peter, He restores him in a role of leadership. Many Christians today look at their past and think that something they did disqualifies them from ever being used by God, let alone any role in leadership. That is false. Such a concept is foreign to the Scriptures. God is in the business of not just forgiving, but also restoring.

— God knows that we cannot express the grace of God to others unless we have experienced the grace of God ourselves. Typically the people who have received the most grace from God are the most effective advocates for the grace of God.



(viii) The count (21:10-11)

10 Jesus *said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught."

10 Jesus *said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught."

10 Jesus told them, "Bring me some of the fish you've just caught."

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

- Jesus already had fish and bread on the charcoal fire, and he asked the disciples to bring them some fish from their huge catch

— It's interesting that Jesus did not decide to meet their need (hunger) by multiplying the bread and fish, as He did in John 6. Instead, He decided to meet their need through a product of their own labor.

— This is important because there are a lot of people today who sit around and say, God will provide. They wait around for someone to contact them, someone to drop something on their lap, thinking that is how God will provide for them. He'll create something out of nothing.

— God does work that way sometimes, but it's not the norm. The norm is that God uses the product of our own labor to meet needs in our lives. By God doing this, He's honoring the principle that He set up after the fall of man in Gen 3:19.

— After the fall, God changed the rules in His dealings with mankind, and man now had to work for their survival, by the sweat of his brow (Cf. Matt 6:26; 1 Tim 5:8; 2 Thess 3:10). The promises of provision from God is in no way a shortcut around the idea that we must contribute through labor, and to get out of that or deny it would be denying the curse.

11 So Simon Peter went up and hauled the net to land, full of large fish, 153; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

11 So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish—153 of them. And although there were so many of them, the net was not torn.

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.

- Attempts to assign meaning to the number 153 fail because they are arbitrary. Even worse, they lead us away from the truth God has revealed to us in His Word (Deut 29:29).

— When numbers in the Bible point to spiritual truth, the Bible explains itself. The Bible is not a codebook we need to decipher: it is God's revelation of Himself.

— The simplest explanation for the 153 seems best: the men caught 153 fish

Various Meanings by Scholars of the 153 Fish?

- Different categories in the united faith
- Proselytes in the days of David and Solomon
- Jewish and Gentile converts in the Church
- 153 species of fish (Cf. Matt 4:19)
- Millennial life to the Dead Sea (Ezek 47:9-10)
- The kills and the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6)
- Trinity and the New Jerusalem walls
- Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-12)
- Feeding of the 5000 (John 6:9,13)
- Greek *gematria* for early Christian titles
- Faithful in Asia, Africa and Europe

Three Dangers of Allegorization

1. The text is not being interpreted
2. There is no test that can be given to the interpreter
3. Authority is transferred from the text to the interpreter

He who spiritualizes tells spiritual lies.

(ix) The communion (21:12-14)

12 Jesus *said to them, "**Come and have breakfast.**" None of the disciples ventured to inquire of Him, "Who are You?" **knowing that it was the Lord.**

12 Jesus *said to them, "**Come and have breakfast.**" None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.

12 Then Jesus told them, "**Come, have breakfast.**" Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?", because they knew it was the Lord.

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.

- Jesus will minister to Peter's spiritual needs in a moment, but first notice that He meets Peter's physical needs. God is involved in meeting both the physical and spiritual needs of His children (Cf. Ps 37:25; Matt 6:25-33).

— *How loving of Jesus to feed Peter before He dealt with his spiritual needs. He gave Peter an opportunity to dry off, get warm, satisfy His hunger, and enjoy personal fellowship. This is a good example for us to follow as we care for God's people. Certainly the spiritual need is more important than the physical, but caring for the physical can prepare the way for the spiritual ministry. Our Lord does not emphasize the soul so much that He neglects the body.* [Wiersbe]

— This simple example of Christ here must inform our ministry to those around us...we cannot simply meet the physical, emotional or psychological needs of people without sharing the gospel with them...that is the Social Gospel. But instead we should use the ministry to the physical needs of people as a platform to show the love of Christ, whereby they would be open to the gospel.

— Jesus today does not just have concern over your eternal destiny, but He also has concern over your physical well being. His concern for us does not ebb and flow like the stock market. His concern for you and His provision for you is something that will be met out of His abundant resources and in His timing, as we learn to walk by faith.

- "...knowing that it was the Lord" - this is the great purpose of the miracles in John's Gospel...they identify Jesus as the unique Son of God so that we may believe and receive life

13 Jesus *came and *took the bread and *gave *it* to them, and the fish likewise.

13 Jesus *came and *took the bread and *gave *it* to them, and the fish likewise.

13 Jesus took the bread, gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

- In the days of Christ, having a meal with someone was a sign of fellowship. The meal that Jesus prepared and ate with Peter indicated a restoration of fellowship with him.

— When we rightly understand this verse, we can also rightly understand Rev 3:20, where Jesus tells the church at Laodicea that he is outside knocking, requesting to come in a dine (fellowship) with them. This verse is commonly used as an invitation to come to Christ and be saved, but in reality the people of the church were already saved, they were just out of fellowship with Christ. Jesus is knocking, hoping to restore fellowship with them.

— Jesus is knocking on the door of the heart of an unbeliever; He is knocking on the door of His own church, asking them to return to fellowship with Him. And we know He's talking to believers here because in v19, He says that those He loves, He rebukes and disciplines. This isn't something that Jesus does to unbelievers, He only disciplines His own (Cf. Heb 12:5-11).

— If a believer today is out of fellowship with the Lord, how do we reconcile that? Instead of dining with Him, we simply confess our sins, and He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

— Just like Rev 3:20, we don't use 1 John 1:9 as an evangelistic passage. Neither of these verses are designed to get someone saved, they're instructions for restoring lost fellowship.

14 This was now the third time that Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

14 This was now the third time that Jesus revealed himself to the disciples after he had been raised from the dead.

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

- The first revelation of the resurrected Christ was to the disciples, without Thomas, in the Upper Room (20:19-23). The second revelation was the following Sunday, to all the disciples, including Thomas, again in the Upper Room (20:24-31).

(e) To Peter and John (21:15-25)

(i) The confessions (21:15-17)

What most people know about this passage is how Jesus and Peter used different Greek words for "love": Jesus uses *agapaō* and Peter uses *phileō*. But these different words are not the highlight of this passage, as these two Greek words for love in John's Gospel are synonyms (different words, same meaning). Here are some examples of how these two words are used interchangeably in John's Gospel:

- The Father's love for the Son: *agapē* (3:35; 10:17); *phileō* (5:20)
- Jesus' love for Lazarus: *agapē* (11:5); *phileō* (11:3,36)
- Jesus' love for John: *agapē* (13:23); *phileō* (20:2)

Thus, it doesn't appear as if the different Greek words for "love" are a big deal here in Jesus' restoration of Peter. Otherwise, John would've made these different words for love more prominent in his Gospel before now. See notes on 5:20.

An interesting idea arises if we look at Mark 16:7, where the angel tells the women at the empty tomb to "go tell His disciples, and Peter" to go to Galilee and Jesus would meet them there. What happened to Peter that the angel did not include Peter with the rest of the disciples? Did he somehow lose his discipleship?

(a) Round 1 (21:15)

- a. Jesus (21:15a)
- b. Peter (21:15b)
- c. Jesus (21:15c)

15 Now when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "**Simon, son of John, do you love [agapaō] Me more than these?**" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; **You know that I love [phileō] You.**" He *said to him, "**Tend My lambs.**"

15 So 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, "**Tend My lambs.**"

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "**Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?**" Peter told him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus told him, "**Feed my lambs.**"

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, **Simon, son of Jonas, lovestthou me more than these?** He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs.**

- It's likely that after breakfast, Jesus and Peter took a walk together along the shoreline (Cf. v20), where this conversation took place. John was likely following close by, within ear shot, in order to hear their conversation.

- "...son of John" - it's interesting that Jesus brings up Peter's biological father not just here, but in each of the three rounds of conversation (21:15,16,17)

— The three-time use of this phrase here makes what Jesus is saying to Peter a big deal
— Jesus also used this phrase when Jesus called him into saving faith (1:42)
- "...these" - it's not clear on what this word is referring to, which has brought up a lot of speculation: was he referring to the catch of fish, and to the other disciples?

1. Disciples — Peter had made a couple of statements to Jesus where he elevated himself over the other disciples (13:37; Matt 26:33).
 - Jesus is essentially asking Peter: Do you love Me more than these other disciples? Because you promoted yourself over them, as if you were somehow more dedicated to Me than they were. So do you love Me more than they love Me?
2. The fish — after his denial, Peter went back to his previous occupation (fishing)
 - Jesus is asking Peter: Do you love Me more than fishing? As soon as things went sideways and you denied Me three times, you went back to fishing, because that is something you knew. Are you willing to walk away from fishing and follow Me, like you did when I first called you?

- "...Yes, Lord; You know that I love You" - notice that Peter didn't point to anything he did in the past (his track record) to show or provide evidence that he loved Jesus. He didn't do this because his track record was not of loving Jesus, but of abject failure.

— Peter does not appeal to his resume to answer this question; rather, he appeals to Jesus' omniscience. He says, Jesus I may not have a great track record of loving You, but you know my heart. You know that I have failed, but because You're omniscient, you know in my heart that I love you.

— Peter's words here are true: he did love the Lord, his motives were sincere although often misguided. The problem with Peter was that he was relying on the wrong source of power to fulfill his destiny in God. Instead of relying on the power of God, he relied on his own ingenuity

- "...Tend" - *boskō*, an imperative; better translated "feed" [KJV] (Cf. v17); it denotes a herdsman with the responsibility of feeding the flock

- "...My" - notice the possessive nature of these future believers: Jesus calls them "My" sheep. These lambs won't belong to Peter or any of the other disciples, they belong to the Lord.

— Pastors, ministry leaders and others in church leadership must always keep in mind that the people involved or attending their ministry or church are not "their" people, they all belong to the Lord. These leadership positions are simply shepherds of God's flock. Peter obviously understood this because he later calls Jesus the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4).

- "...lambs" - *arnion*, baby believers; Peter is commissioned to feed them. Baby believers are fed with the "milk" of the Word. This is what Peter did in 1 Peter (Cf. 1 Peter 5:2).

— When Jesus says "Tend (feed) My lambs" He's drawing from an analogy used throughout John's Gospel: just as the physical man needs food to be physically nourished,

in the same way the spiritual man desperately needs spiritual food in order to experience spiritual development and to grow, to be spiritually sustained (Cf. Job 23:12; Deut 8:3).

— Peter evidently got the message of the importance of feeding ourselves spiritually on God's Word (1 Peter 2:2). Just like a newborn baby screams in the middle of the night for milk, our spiritual man inside of us desperately needs to be fed the pure milk of the Word.

— If someone came to you and said, I'm really tired, rundown, and weak. And you ask then, When was the last time you ate a good meal, and they say, I haven't eaten in two weeks. You're not going to wonder why that person is so weak and frail, because they just told you they haven't eaten in two weeks. That's the reason they are run down.

— We have people in the body of Christ today who do the exact same thing: I'm fatigued, I'm worn down, Christianity isn't working out for me the way I thought it would, and you ask them, When was the last time you were fed spiritually from the Word of God? When was the last time you got into the presence of the Lord and began to read the Scriptures for yourself? When was the last time you went to a church that faithfully teaches the Word of God?

— Just as we wouldn't feel sorry for someone who was weak or rundown for the simple reason that they didn't sit down and have a good meal for two weeks, it's also difficult to feel sorry for those who are downtrodden in the Christian life simply because they are malnourished. The reason they are malnourished is their own fault.

— Once we begin to understand the analogy and parallel, we understand what Jesus is saying to Peter here, as Jesus moves him into a role of not just an evangelist, but a shepherd: the primary calling of a pastor is to feed the flock of God with the Word of God.

— The role of a pastor is to feed the sheep with the Word of God, in order to equip them to become shepherds and teachers themselves, to fulfill the calling that God has given them (2 Tim 3:16-17; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Peter 2:2; Cf. Jer 3:15; Deut 8:3)

A quote often used in the Grace Brethren church/denomination is: *The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.*

(b) Round 2 (21:16)

a. Jesus (21:16a)

b. Peter (21:16b)

c. Jesus (21:16c)

16 He *said to him again, a second time, "**Simon, son of John, do you love [agapaō] Me?**" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love [*phileō*] You." He *said to him, "**Shepherd My sheep.**"

16 He *said to him again 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, "**Shepherd My sheep.**"

16 Then he asked him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter told him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus told him, "Take care of my sheep."

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.

- Jesus asks Peter the same question again (Cf. v15); Peter gives Jesus the same answer...

- "...Shepherd" - *poimainō*, to shepherd or guide; the noun form of the root word for *poimainō* is where we get the Greek word for "pastor"

— If you want to know how a pastor or spiritual leader should function, we need to look at how a shepherd functions in the natural world. Sheep are dumb and defenseless, thus the shepherd has a critical role in the protection of these dumb and defenseless sheep. There are three primary jobs of a shepherd:

1. Graze - feed them, referring to the Word of God
2. Guide - guide them, direct them, even when they don't want to listen
3. Guard - protect them from whatever is coming in to hurt them.
 - In the natural world, the shepherd protects the sheep from the wolves; in the Bible, Satan is analogized to a wolf who has all sorts of designs on how to get his hands on the sheep.
 - The job of the pastor/shepherd is to protect the sheep from satanic attack, both doctrinally and physically

- "...sheep" - *probaton*, mature sheep. *Poimaine* comes from the same word as pastor.

Active imperative: to be continuously performed.

— Peter was commissioned to be a shepherd; to exercise rule over other believers; exercise his authority. He fulfilled this second commission in the Book of Acts.

(c) Round 3 (21:17)

a. Jesus (21:17a)

b. Peter (21:17b)

c. Jesus (21:17c)

17 He *said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love [phileo] Me?" Peter was hurt **because He said to him the third time, "Do you love [phileo] Me?"** And he said to Him, "Lord, You **know** all things; You **know** that I love [phileo] You." Jesus *said to him, **"Tend My sheep."**

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 all things; You know that I love You." Jesus *said to him, **"Tend My sheep."**

17 He asked him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was deeply hurt that he had asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" So he told him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you!" Jesus told him, **"Feed my sheep."**

17 He saith unto him the third time, **Simon, son of Jonas, lovestthou 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.**

- "...because He said to him the third time" - many people teach that Peter was grieved because Jesus changed His word for love from *agapaō* to *phileō*, but that's not what this says. It says that Peter was grieved because Jesus asked him the same question for the third time.

— The reason why Jesus asked Peter the same question for the third time is that Jesus is countering Peter's three-fold denial. Peter denied the Lord three times, so now Jesus is allowing Peter to affirm his love and commitment for the Lord three times.

— When Peter denied the Lord three times, he did so in front of witnesses. Here, Jesus is reaffirming Peter in front of witnesses (the disciples). Peter denied the Lord beside a charcoal fire (Cf. 18:18); Jesus is now allowing Peter to reaffirm his love and commitment beside a charcoal fire (Cf. v9).

— When you read the first 10 chapters in Acts, there is not a man alive who was more critical or used by God to build and grow the early church than Peter. Peter was the man. He presided over the replacement of Judas by Matthias; he led 3000 to Christ at Pentecost; he led the first Gentile to Christ (Cornelius). Why? Because Jesus took him through this process of brokenness and failure during His ministry so that Peter would stop relying on himself and become fully dependent upon the power of God working through him.

- The most effective advocates to preach the grace of God are those who have received it the most. You don't understand the grace of God because you haven't received the grace of God, the only message you have for people is "try harder." That's not grace, it's works.

- "...Do you love Me?" - Jesus asks Peter this question for the third consecutive time. What makes someone qualified to be a spiritual leader? Is it talent? No, God is omnipotent; He typically chooses the least talented among us. Is it commitment? No.

— Jesus tells us what His most important requirement for a spiritual leader: love. Love God and love people. This is what God is looking for. This is the only thing that God was looking for from Peter. Jesus already knew that Peter's talent failed him, He already knew that he failed multiple times in his commitment, so Jesus is questioning him if he had love.

— *There can be little doubt but that the whole scene is meant to show us Peter as completely restored to his position of leadership. It is further worth noting that the one thing about which Jesus questioned Peter prior to commissioning him to tend the flock was love. This is the basic qualification for Christian service. Other qualities may be desirable, but love is completely indispensable.* [Leon Morris]

- There are two Greek words for "know"; Peter uses both in this verse:

- "...know" - *idenai*, to possess innate knowledge about something; to understand facts about someone or something
- "...know" - *ginōskō*, to acquire knowledge, to know by experience. It is the deepest form of experiential knowledge (Cf. Gen 4:1)
- "...Tend My sheep" - *boskō* My *probata*, feed My mature sheep; Peter would later challenge other pastors to "feed to flock of God which is among you" (1 Peter 5:2)

1st Commission - Keep on feeding My little lambs (new believers) (1 Peter)

2nd Commission - Keep on shepherding My sheep (Acts)

3rd Commission - Keep on feeding My sheep (mature believers) (2 Peter)

1 Cor 13:1-3:

1 If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 If I have *the gift of* prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 And if I give away all my possessions *to charity*, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good.

18 Truly, truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to put on your belt and walk wherever you wanted; but when you grow old, you will **stretch out your hands** and someone else will put your belt on you, and bring you where you do not want to go."

18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."

18 "Truly, I tell you emphatically, when you were young, you would fasten your belt and go wherever you liked. But when you get old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten your belt and take you where you don't want to go."

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

- Jesus gives a prophecy to Peter, contrasting his younger years with his older years

— Jesus says to Peter that when he was younger, he was free as a bird; he used to do what he wanted, when he wanted. He had few to no restrictions.

— But when he gets older, he will not be able to make his own decisions; he will not have the same type of freedom that he had when he was younger. Someone will take him to a place that he does not want to go.

- "...stretch out your hands" - a euphemism for crucifixion; this is the first hint that we get that Peter will die a martyr's death very similar to that of Jesus Himself
- Peter lived the remainder of his life under a death sentence; he later makes reference to this conversation in 2 Peter 1:14
- It is this death sentence, hanging over Peter's life, that motivated him. He realized from this conversation that he did not have an unlimited amount of time to become what God had called him to be or do what God called him to do.
- After Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter did everything in his power to press into that design that God had for him, and to become what he ultimately became: a critical character in the birth and life of the church (Acts 1-10).
- Because of the fragile nature of life (James 4:14; Ps 90:10,12; 103:15-16; Eccl 1:2), we have a limited time in life to become what God has designed for us and to do what God has planned for us, and to press into His purposes for our life
- It's interesting how literally Jesus' prophecies here come to pass. Jesus doesn't get specific that Peter would be crucified upside down, but He clearly states Peter's eventual crucifixion. The literal fulfillment of this prophecy, along with all the others, proves that Jesus was in fact the Son of God (Cf. 13:19).

Those who refute the Doctrine of Imminency (those with a post-Tribulation view) use this verse to argue that the early church could not believe in the imminent return of Christ for His Church. This argument is readily answered: Peter himself encouraged believers to look for the coming of the Lord, calling those who did not do so "willingly ignorant" (2 Peter 4:3-5). He knew that he might die suddenly (2 Peter 1:14), and Herod had just killed James and seized Peter with the same intention (Acts 12:1-3). Certainly believers expected Peter's early death, for when Rhoda bore the news of his release, they said "Thou art mad," and when he appeared to them "they were astonished" (Acts 12:15-16). They had no concept that his would be a long life, and as they looked for the Savior they certainly did not run around asking, "I wonder if Peter is dead yet?" Actually, the passage in question, which recorded Christ's conversation with Peter, could not have been a factor in their thinking, for it was not written and sent to the churches until 20 or more years *after* the death of Peter.

19 Now He said this, indicating by what kind of death **he would glorify God**. And when He had said this, He *said to him, "**Follow Me!**"

19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He *said to him, "**Follow Me!**"

19 Now he said this to show by what kind of death he would glorify God. After saying this, Jesus told him, "**Keep following me.**"

19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, **Follow me.**

- "...he would glorify God" - Peter's martyrdom would bring glory to God in the same way that the death of God the Son brought glory to God the Father (12:24,27-28)

— "glorify" - *doxazō*, the same word used in 12:28 to describe the glory that Christ's death brought to the Father

— The idea that we glorify God through our suffering is not only for Peter and the apostles...it is for all believers. God desires to glorify Himself through our sufferings, although not all believers are called to be martyrs (1 Peter 4:14-16).

— As 21st century believers, we often think that if we encounter suffering, we must be outside the will of God. But the fact of the matter is, if we're enduring suffering, it's likely that we're directly in the will of God.

— Peter's future martyrdom via crucifixion is simply fitting into the pattern of his Master ("a servant is not greater than his master"); as we experience suffering in our life, we are also fitting into the pattern of our Master.

- "...Follow Me!" - imperative mood, present tense, meaning it is a command, not a suggestion; the present tense means to follow Me now, and continue to follow Me into the future. It's not a one-time event, but a perpetual pattern of life.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. [Jim Elliott]

(iii) The concern (21:20-21)

20 Peter turned around and *saw **the disciple whom Jesus loved** following *them*—the one who also had leaned back on His chest at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who is betraying You?"

20 Peter, turning around, *saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following *them*; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

20 Peter turned around and noticed the disciple whom Jesus kept loving following them. He was the one who had put his head on Jesus' chest at the supper and had asked, "Lord, who is the one who is going to betray you?"

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?

- "...the disciple whom Jesus loved" - the Apostle John

- John resurfaces the event in the Upper Room where John was leaning on Jesus' chest, and Peter asked John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was (Cf. 13:21-26)

21 So Peter, upon seeing him, *said to Jesus, "Lord, and what *about* this man?"

21 So Peter seeing him *said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"

21 When Peter saw him, he said, "Lord, what about him?"

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

- Peter heard and understood God's will for how his life was going to end; now Peter inquires of Jesus what God's will was for another believer (John)

— Peter was not the first nor the last believer who was more interested in someone else's walk with the Lord than his own. Unfortunately this has become an obsession of many believers throughout history, including today.

(iv) The chiding (21:22)

22 Jesus *said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you? **You follow Me!**"

22 Jesus *said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me!"

22 Jesus told him, "If it's my will for him to remain until I come back, how does that concern you? You must keep following me!"

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

- Jesus abruptly corrects Peter by politely telling him that God's will for John is none of his business

— Peter should be more concerned with his own walk with the Lord than in what God has for another believer

— What Jesus decided to do with John was completely outside of Peter's purview and concern. It was solely left to God's sovereignty, and Peter was not to be preoccupied with how God deals with other believers.

- "...You" - emphatic in this sentence; Jesus was focusing Peter on himself, not anyone else

- "...follow" - active imperative verb, meaning the subject (Peter) is the doer of the action; the imperative mood is a command, not a suggestion, and the command is to follow and keep on following. It's not a one-time action and done...it's a continuous action (a habit or lifestyle) into the future.

— Continuously following Jesus was to be the preoccupation of Peter's life, and it is to be the preoccupation of our lives. Not by being a busybody, interjecting ourselves into the life of someone else wondering what God is going to do in their life.

— Certainly we're in community with each other, we minister to each other, we help and love each other, we are "others" focused, but sometimes we can take that too far where we preoccupy ourselves with other people. But this is not the point of our lives.

— The point of our lives is just what Jesus commanded Peter here: following Jesus. We minister to others out of the abundance of that relationship that we have with Christ. If you

are not following Jesus Christ, walking with Him moment-by-moment, you really don't have much with which to minister to other people. The power of our ministry comes from our relationship with Him, and out of the overflow of that relationship, you'll find that you have a vibrant ministry in the lives of other people.

- Why is it wrong to interject ourselves into the lives of others? Because God is a God of variety, of creativity, of uniqueness. This is evident in creation...no two fingerprints are the same; no two snowflakes are the same.

— Thus, the way God chooses to work in my neighbor's life is completely different and distinct from how He may choose to work in my life. God's plans for my neighbor are not necessarily God's plans for me. God has gifted me and given me opportunities that He has not given to my neighbor, and vice versa.

— Therefore, it is foolish to focus on what God is doing in someone else's life. God is so rich and diverse and creative that we cannot even comprehend the plans He has for me, or my neighbor. This is why we should focus exclusively on Him and follow Him, not the walk of our neighbor (1 Cor 12:4-6).

— If I was exactly like my neighbor, I'd be unnecessary and irrelevant. I become necessary because God's plan for me is special, diverse from everyone else, unique.

- It's interesting to study the lives of both Peter and John after Jesus' ascension:

— Peter was commissioned by God to be the apostle to the Jews; he was instrumental in the forming of the early church, then fell off the radar but was still ministering to the large Jewish population in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). He wrote 1 & 2 Peter from Babylon; both epistles were written to the churches in Galatia (Asia Minor) (Cf. 1 Peter 1:1).

— John on the other hand was not as prominent in the early church; he lived at least 30 years longer than Peter as the last living apostle. His ministry blossomed most at the end of his life, when he wrote this Gospel, along with 1-2-3 John, and Revelation in about 95 AD. After writing Revelation, tradition holds that he left Patmos and became bishop over the churches in Asia Minor, while living in Ephesus.

(v) The confusion (21:23)

23 Therefore this account went out among the brothers, that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but *only*, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but *only*, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

23 So the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple wasn't going to die. Yet Jesus didn't say to Peter that he wasn't going to die, but, "If it's my will for him to remain until I come back, how does that concern you?"

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?**

- Go figure...someone in the church misconstrued God's Word and started a rumor...
- Jesus was only giving a hypothetical ("If") about John's life in order to make a point to Peter. Jesus never said that John would not die. Jesus simply reasserted His sovereignty over John, and what He wanted to happen would happen, and Peter shouldn't worry about John, but worry about himself.
- Jesus did appear to John, but it wasn't at the Second Coming. It was on the island of Patmos, where Jesus appeared to him (Rev 1:17) and gave him a vision of what was to come to pass before His Second Coming.

(vi) The confirmation (21:24-25)

24 This is the disciple who is testifying about these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them down. We know that his testimony is true.

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

- John is claiming again to be the author of this Gospel, and he is saying that he was an eyewitness (Cf. 1:14; 1 John 1:1) to these events and these teachings

— He also claims that his eyewitness testimony of the things written in this Gospel are true

— One of the best evidences to John's truthfulness here is that he was boiled in hot oil for his testimony of Christ. It is one thing to die for the truth, but quite another to be tortured for a lie.

25 But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written in detail, I expect that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they *were* written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself *would* not contain the books that *would* be written.

25 Of course, Jesus also did many other things, and I suppose that if every one of them were written down, the world couldn't contain the books that would be written.

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.

- John is saying that the brief record of Jesus signs and teachings I've given you in this Gospel is not exhaustive, many signs, events and teachings were left out
- The reason why things were left out, speaking hyperbolically, John says that the world could not contain the books that would have to be written
- Rather than being focused on what we don't have (i.e. Jesus' life from age 12-30), we need to focus on what we do have, which is sufficient for belief and subsequent salvation (20:30-31; Cf. 2 Peter 1:3-4). What John gives us is sufficient for any objective inquirer to read and understand who Jesus is: the Son of God.