

John Chapter 21 – Breakfast by the seaside

After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*: ² Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." ⁶ And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find *some*." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. ⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. ⁹ Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come *and* eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"—knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴ This *is* now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. ¹⁵ So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, 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." ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, 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, "Feed My sheep. ¹⁸ Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish." ¹⁹ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." ²⁰ Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" ²¹ Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what *about* this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me." ²³ Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you?" ²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Introduction

A few miles from my home town in England is a beautiful little fishing village called Beer.

It is one of only a few places in England where you can actually have "Breakfast on the Beach"

There are 3 Cafés to choose from. In the picture on the screen the Café that is closed, colored green is my favorite spot. As a treat for your summer guests, when the weather is fine, you can take them to one of these Cafes for a full English breakfast. The white chalk cliffs radiating the sunshine, and the gentle noise of the waves crashing against the pebble beach, and the smell of frying bacon are enough to help you relax in this beautiful setting.

However today we are going to consider a different treat on a different beach. It is breakfast on the beach with an important spiritual significance.

The beach is on the shore of Lake Galilee. Sometimes it is called the sea of Tiberias, however it is the same place.

It is important in this chapter that we stick with the pattern that John has already established in the rest of the gospel. So far in John's gospel whenever John has pointed out one of Jesus Signs or Miracles, the interpretation of the sign or miracle is the subject of much explanation through teaching. For example after Jesus fed the 5,000 people in John chapter 6: v. 1-14, He then started to teach them the spiritual significance of that miracle from v. 22-59.

So the pattern that John has continued in his gospel is first to tell us about the miracle or sign of catching the fish and then to move forward and explain the spiritual significance of that miracle.

The conversation between Jesus and Peter concerns the feeding of Jesus' sheep, which is His future disciples. Jesus has just fed His disciples with fish from the miraculous catch, therefore the subject matter of the final chapter is all centered on this event of the feeding of Jesus' Apostles.

Jesus feeds His Apostles physically with the fish, and then reinstates Peter as a representative of all the Apostles, so that Peter and all of the Apostles may feed God's people.

This last sign at the end of John's gospel ties in neatly with John's purpose statement in chapter 20: v. 31.

³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

By recording these events John is giving the readers substantial evidence in order to believe in Jesus, as the Son of God.

There are only two sections in this chapter. These are Jesus feeds His Apostles in v. 1-14 and then Jesus calls His Apostles to feed His sheep in v. 15-25.

1. Jesus Feeds His Apostles – v. 1-14.

Peter and a group of the disciples went on a night fishing trip on Lake Galilee. Although night time can be the best time for catching fish, unfortunately they caught nothing. They were experienced fishermen returning from a night's trip and they would have been very disappointed.

When they arrived in the morning Jesus stood on the shore to greet them.

Peter and his team didn't know it was Jesus standing on the lakeside.

Jesus enquired if they had caught any fish. They replied "NO"

Jesus told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat and they would find some.

They obeyed Jesus' instructions and caught so many fish that they were not able to draw the net in.

It was truly an amazing miracle. Jesus had provided enough fish for 153 people to come for breakfast, but they were going to have problems bringing all the fish into the boat.

Suddenly one of the disciples noticed that it was JESUS on the lakeside who had instructed them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. Peter, when he heard it was Jesus who was giving instructions from the shore, got dressed and dived into the sea. He couldn't wait to meet up with the resurrected Jesus.

Peter left the disciples to bring in the fish. He was more concerned with the person of Jesus than with the provision of Jesus.

When they all arrived at the lakeside, Jesus had already prepared a fire and was cooking some fish on it. He also had bread available.

In v. 10 Jesus tells the disciples to bring some of the fish that they had just caught.

You may not know this but if you eat fish on the same day that you catch it, then the taste is different. It is absolutely delicious.

A Fisherman in England once told us this as we bought fish from his boat. We tried it and he was right, it was most delicious.

Anyway we are told in v. 11 that they managed to get all the 153 fish to shore without breaking the net.

Jesus served the breakfast to His disciples, it was His miracle, and his provision to the disciples.

What a wonderful breakfast it must have been. The sun rising over Lake Galilee, eating fresh fish cooked on an open fire and sharing all of this with the resurrected Jesus Christ. It doesn't get much better.

We don't need to read too much into the miracle itself, it is what follows through the teaching of Jesus that is important.

John closes this first section by reminding us that this was the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

2. Jesus calls His Apostles to feed His Sheep – v. 15- 25.

This passage has three main sections. Firstly in v. 15-17 Peter is reinstated as an under-shepherd. Then in v. 18-22 Peter is told that for him, feeding Jesus' sheep will mean following Jesus to the point of death. Finally in v. 23-25 John does not die but lives to record Jesus' words and works. John continues to feed Jesus' sheep through the gospel of John, even today.

a) Peter is reinstated as an under-shepherd. V. 15-17.

Jesus asks Peter the same question three times. The question is "Do you love me?"

By repeating the question three times it reminded Peter of his three denials of knowing Jesus that are recorded in chapter 18. Also the similar situation of being around a warm fire at the time of Peter's denial would have added extra weight to his memory.

Peter was given an opportunity to wipe out his three denials by three declarations of his love for Jesus. Peter was in a public situation where all the disciples could hear him re-affirming his love for Jesus three times.

The first time Jesus says to Peter "Do you love me", He adds the words, "more than these."

There are two possible answers as to what the "These" were.

It may be that Jesus was referring to Peter's fishing business, pointing to the boat and the net. Jesus may have been saying, do you love me enough to give up your career and livelihood, to

follow me, and work for me.? This may have been a final challenge for Peter. Was Peter prepared to give up his life's work in order to follow Jesus and feed God's people?

The second possibility was that Jesus looked at the little group of disciples and Jesus said, "Do you love me more than your fellow disciples do?"

It may be that Jesus was looking back to a night when Peter said "Even if all are made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble." (Matthew 26: v. 33.)

It may be that Jesus was gently reminding Peter how once he had thought that he alone could be faithful and how his courage had failed him in the challenging time.

It is more likely that this is the meaning as in the Matthew verse that I quoted, Jesus immediately predicts Peter's denial and giving up his fishing never seemed to be an issue for Peter.

The KEY ISSUE here is that Peter is taught that loving JESUS involves feeding His people.

I want to give out a personal challenge today to all those Christians who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

The Challenge is the same challenge that Jesus gave Peter. Do you really love Jesus enough to feed His sheep? The greatest need in the Church today is disciple-making disciples. By this I mean spending time with a new Christian or someone who has been a Christian for a while but hasn't been personally discipled on a one to one basis with another mature believer.

You will have an opportunity to respond to that challenge during the prayer time later.

You might ask the question, "What does it mean to feed Jesus' sheep?"

The answer is always in the text. If you read through John's gospel you will discover that feeding these sheep will involve teaching them about Jesus' words and works.

Prior to the death of Jesus, Peter had no understanding and no message for Jesus' sheep. However now Peter is beginning to understand that he has the message of forgiveness and eternal life to bring to God's people, as he teaches them about the words and works of Jesus Christ.

Once again the reader of John's gospel can now trust the Apostles who have been given a specific commission to feed Jesus' people.

- b) Peter is told that for him, feeding Jesus' sheep will mean following Jesus to the point of death. v. 18-22.

Jesus tells Peter about the type of death that he is going to face in the future.

It would be a death similar to that of Jesus Christ. By that I mean a death by crucifixion.

This prophecy about the death of Peter adds weight to the full restoration of Peter. The witness of the Apostle Peter could be trusted.

What is important to us in this section is that we too can trust in the lessons of discipleship.

We need to go back to John Chapter 12:v. 23-26. (Quote these verses)

²³ But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him *My* Father will honor.

The risen Lord Jesus still calls us as His disciples for this kind of fruitful service.

God promises to truly honor disciples of Jesus who really do give up their lives to follow and serve Jesus.

Jim Elliot the famous Christian who was killed trying to reach the Auca Indians in S. America said this – “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Adoniram Judson (1788 – 1850) was a Baptist missionary who gave up his life to serve as the first N. American protestant missionary in Burma (Myanmar). It took him 12 years to see his first 18 converts. By the time he died he had established 100 Churches with over 8,000 members. Even today the Baptist Churches celebrate “Judson Day” to remember his arrival in the country.

We may not have the impact upon a country like Adoniram Judson, but whatever God chooses to do through us when we chose to give up our lives for Him will be worth it.

Finally in v. 23-25 we are told that John does not die but lives to record Jesus words and works.

Here John makes a reference to himself in these verses. He makes it clear that not all the Apostles will be called to lay down their lives. John was commissioned by Jesus to feed His sheep by recording them. He recorded the words and works of Jesus.

Jesus has a different plan and purpose for each of His disciples. The way to discover that plan is to be willing to lay down our lives for Him.

Application

1. The priority of Jesus between His resurrection and his return is that His people should be fed through His Apostle’s teaching. Therefore we should make it our priority to feed on that teaching ourselves. We should always make sure if at all possible that we attend a Church where we are fed upon God’s word. If you want entertainment, go to an entertainment center.

We should always try to serve other people by encouraging them to feed upon God’s word.

2. If Jesus’ priority is the feeding of His sheep, then those of us who know His voice and follow Him, must make it our priority too. We all have a part to play in this by using our gifts and talents to spread the word of God to anybody who will listen.