

Appearance to 7 Disciples in Galilee – Part 1

John 21:1-14

Appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection:

1. Mary at the tomb – John 20:11-18
2. Woman leaving the tomb – Matt. 28:9-10
3. Two followers on the road to Emmaus – Luke 24:13-32
4. Peter – Luke 24:34
5. 10 of the 11 disciples – no Thomas – John 20:19-25
6. 11 disciples – Thomas (8 days later) John 20:26-31
7. 7 disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee – John 21:1-25
8. 500+ disciples and followers in Galilee – I Cor. 15:6
9. James the brother of Jesus – I Cor. 15:7
10. 11 disciples at the ascension – Acts 1:3-11

The first three Gospel records leave us wondering how Peter moved from denying Christ in the judgement hall to the place of leadership in the Book of Acts. In his epilogue, John will tell of the wonderful public conversation that indicated to all Christ's confidence in and call to Peter. Here is the setting for that conversation: Matthew – last time denial Mark – last time denial, angel at the tomb mentions Peter Luke – running to the sepulcher, wondering

Peter and John were close. Often, we would see them together during Jesus' ministry, trials, and resurrection. John will finish his book with a Peter epilogue. Also, this is an example of one of the many events left out of John's narrative. He recorded this incident to give more information about Peter and clear up the rumor about John not dying.

I. "I go a fishing"

"After these things (after Jerusalem appearances) Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee); and on this wise shewed he himself. 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. 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 ("immediately" is not in the Greek, the phrase "We also go with thee" was enthusiastic and perhaps this word helped shape that emotion); and that night they caught nothing." John 21:1-3

"shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias" – Jesus had told the disciples several times that He would see them again in Galilee. (Matt. 28:7,10; Mark 14:28) Logically this is where they went in obedience. This area was many of the disciples' home.

The term "Sea of Tiberias" is interesting. Only John speaks of the Sea of Tiberias. He wrote his book at least 15 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the dissembling of the Jewish nation. The contemporary readers would have only known the "Roman" name, Sea of Tiberias, named after Tiberias Caesar, not the Jewish name, Sea of Galilee. John 6:1

7 disciples – It is obvious of the restitution and unity of mind among the disciples after Thomas was brought to belief. Here are 7 out of the 11 together. Two are unnamed. Perhaps they were staying at Peter’s home, he certainly seems to take the leadership role.

“I go a fishing”/ “We also go with thee” – All the disciples had led busy lives the past 3 years with Jesus. They had traveled and interacted with multitudes of people from all walks of life. They had been physically active, and both mentally and spiritually engaged by Jesus’ teaching but now things were very different. Their whole life patterns had been altered. When Peter suggested a night of fishing the rest of them seemed not to hesitate to join along. Really, no one should expect 7 young men to sit idle.

Over the years, many theologians and preachers have condemned these disciples for returning to fishing. Yet, this was what they knew; they were where Christ had told them to be, and remember Jesus never condemned them for fishing! The Greek verb for “go” suggests an expedition rather than a career. And in my study only one out of eleven commentaries felt these disciples did the wrong thing by returning to fishing. Let’s make one more point, they all would have expenses and responsibilities financially. Catching and selling fish was a legitimate way to earn money.

“that night they caught nothing” – I love to fish! It’s a genic trait I get from both my mother and my father’s side. So I personally know the frustration it is to sometimes come in tired, cold, wet, and hungry after hours spent in a boat and not have anything to show for it. I know the pain to have wasted so much time and energy for nothing! I’m just a recreational fisherwoman! My knowledge is limited, and my rod and reel are pretty small compared to nets! These disciples were professionals; they had the equipment and the know-how to fish! Yet, “that night they caught nothing”. God had set them up to display His glory and do a miracle! This failure was in the plan of God to build their faith!

II. “Cast the net on the right side”

“But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children (Gk - ”lads” friendly), have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 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.”
John 21:4-6

“the disciples knew not that it was Jesus” – The seven disciples didn’t recognize Jesus’ person or His voice. Perhaps he was too far, or the morning light was still too dim but more probable Jesus hid from them who He was. Usually even from a 100 yards we can make out who someone is that we know. But already Jesus had hidden his identity from Mary Magdalene and the two on the Emmaus Road.

“Children, have ye any meat? – It was at dawn when the professional fishermen would return with their night’s catch. Most often the fishermen had regular buyers, but other merchants would be known to meet them to try and buy the fish in case the load was not claimed or if they needed to fill a late order. This was not an odd question coming from the shore. The Greek showed that when Jesus asked the question, He expected a negative answer. Of course He did, Jesus knew the ship was empty

“No” – The simple, short answer to the question was “no”. The emotion in the Greek is that of disappointment. I smiled when I read that, I certainly know the feeling too! If the answer was “yes”, then as a good fisherman your pulling up the biggest and fattest fish and showing it off to any on-looker. But the “no” answer, always gets a quick and simple reply with maybe a story about the one that got away!

“Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find” – So far, the conversation held over 100 yards of open water had been simple and ordinary. But suddenly it took on a strange similarity to an event that happened over three years before.

This incident is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. **(Luke 5:4-11)** – John did not give this event

- Centered on Peter
- Andrew (Matthew & Mark records Andrew’s presence), James, John were with Peter
- They had fished all night and were on shore washing/repairing their nets
- Jesus told Peter to launch out and let down the nets for a catch
- Peter seemed to complain but obeyed
- Caught a great multitude of fish
- Their net was breaking
- Filled and almost sank two ships
- Peter’s first reaction was to worship Jesus calling Him Lord
- Fear gripped Peter as he recognized his sin (Luke 5:10)
- All the fishermen left behind the fish and followed Jesus!

Here again we see Jesus directing the disciples and telling them the outcome! J Vernon McGee said of this, “He gives the instructions, and they are to be obeyed.” (p. 501)

“and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” – Doing what Jesus instructed and with His blessing they found the multitude of fishes! The same boat position, same fishing gear, the men were the same, they possessed the same skill, but empty is now full because of Jesus’ word! The difference between success and failure was the width of their boat when they obeyed the Master!

III. “It is the Lord”

“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. And the other disciples came in a little ship (dinghy); (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits (100 yards),) dragging the net with fishes.” John 21:7-8

“It is the Lord” – It was John who first realized it was Jesus on the shore! In the Greek he said this statement both quietly and joyfully! Why did he turn to Peter? Maybe he was the closest to John, perhaps John was very aware of the emotional fall-out and spiritual struggle Peter had been suffering since that night in the judgement hall when he denied Christ three times.

“he girt his fisher’s coat unto him,” – It was John who had the spiritual perception to know Jesus, but Peter had the drive to get near to Christ as quick as he could! No 100-yard swim, huge catch of fish, or boat that needed tending was going to stop him! He might have beaten the boats by 10-15 minutes...not that long...but he was with Jesus longer than the others! Don’t think less of the other six! If they would have all jumped in the lake and swam to shore the fish would have been lost!

Everyone I studied believed Peter was clothed while fishing. Nakedness is and was a shame. The men would have been working in a short wrap like shorts and maybe even with a t-shirt type top. This is not what they would walk around in public, it would have been counted “naked” like underwear, but suitable for working with other men. BUT in Peter’s mind, this was not appropriate to come before Christ with! No one would have thought less of him to swim in less....but that was not how Peter saw it!

“dragging the net with fishes” – The rest of the six disciples were now responsible to get the large catch of fish to shore! Most of the fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee did not dock but anchor away from shore and then “little ships” or a dinghy would be used to move both men and fish from the fishing vessel. But in this instance, they could not get the fish into the fishing boat, or into the little ship, they literally had to drag the load of fish through the water!

IV. “a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon,”

“As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great (large in size, big) fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.” John 21:9-11

“they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread” – These men would have come to shore cold, wet, hungry, and tired. Jesus provided warmth, food and rest! He created this meal for them. He knew what they needed and He provided it for them!

“Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.” – Would they have abandoned their catch had not Christ told them to bring it in? Were they so mesmerized by the risen Jesus that they found the fish unimportant? Jesus had a meal prepared but then invited them to bring in their catch. He accepted and honored their labor and obedience. Jesus didn’t want any of the fish to be lost! It was our main character, Peter who single-handedly dragged the fish to shore! Think adrenaline had anything to do with it! I do!

“an hundred and fifty and three:” – It was an old grandpa John who looked over the years of time and remembered the exact number of fish caught that day---153! There is nothing spiritually profound about this number. Only that these seasoned fishermen were so amazed by the amount of fish, the size of the fish, and that the net didn’t break that they had to count them! The number was so remarkable that John remembered 153 his whole life! You can hear the continued amazement of those things he had heard and seen of Jesus so many years before in I John 1:1-4.

V. “Come and dine”

“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 then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.” John 21:12-14

“Come and dine” – (Gk – breakfast invitation) What a warm, friendly invitation. Jesus continued to renew fellowship with them. In His resurrected body, Jesus was the host who provided and served a simple meal for all these men! The Scriptures tell us that He, “giveth them,” this nourishment, rest, fellowship, and later instruction. Acts 1:3

“This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself” – This was the third appearance to the disciples John had recorded. Providing the seven disciples with a load of great fishes and a seaside breakfast was the last recorded miracle in the book of John.

Believer’s Application:

1. What we wear, is it that big of deal!? Peter thought so! The seven fishermen would have been working in a short wrap like shorts and maybe even with a t-shirt type top. This is not how they would have walk around in public, it would have been counted “naked” like underwear, but suitable for working with other men. BUT in Peter’s mind, this was not appropriate to come before Christ! No one would have thought less of him to swim in light-weight clothing and wait for his coat to come with the boat....but in Peter’s mind, that was not how he saw it!

How about me!? In a day and age that almost anything goes when it comes to our clothing at church or Bible studies, this well-placed detail of Peter’s actions stopped and made me think. Absolutely, we want unbelievers to come as they are in body and soul to hear the Gospel, but that is not an excuse for myself who knows Christ. For me to come to church or Bible studies in work or play clothes because I’m are too lazy to change should not be. As Peter desired to respect Christ, shouldn’t I desire to respect my time sitting and learning from the Bible enough to change my dirty, worn, or dingy clothes! WOW----I have found myself in that lazy mindset! Just too lazy to change! In this story Peter inconvenienced himself to be able to stand before Jesus appropriately. I can do the same----it’s Biblical! Just a good reminder!

2. Jesus still provides! This resurrected Jesus was still God---and He still provides all things for His own! Much is taught about the character of God and how we must know and learn of Him. Here we see the heart of Christ our God. Don’t miss the gentleness and sweetness Jesus demonstrated as He talked with the disciples, instructed them, and then called them to eat! This is the same sweet Jesus that knows our hearts, holds us up when we are fearful, and provides our every need in such a tender way. Recently, when going through a very difficult time I was reminded again and again of the gentle, sweet hand of Jesus that lead us. As Christ spoke gently to Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus, as He caringly dealt with the sick and broken, as He graciously answered both the questions of the religious Nicodemus and the heart-broken woman at the well, this same Jesus dealt with me gently, sweetly, quietly, and tenderly. Jesus met my every need those dark days with the exact amount of love, care, and sometimes quiet rebuke. Of all the lessons I learned those months, Jesus’ gentle leading was the one that stood out the greatest. Jesus is a gentle Savior, and Friend. Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 23 2 Peter 1:2-3; 3:18