

John 21

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 15 July 2015 16:20

Though the final chapter of this remarkable, powerful book, the contents show that the Christian Church was only just beginning. The new era lasted to the time the last eye-witness to the Lord's exploits died, but carries on through men called of God up to this day, and into the future to the end of time. It is my considered view, from scriptural study and evidence, that the gifts* carried on, too, and did not cease at the death of the last disciple who knew Jesus. Do not confuse this view with the heretical teachings of charismatic pseudo-theology!

(*Today, no man can claim to have power within himself to do anything miraculous. Even so, this is what it was like in Jesus' day... apostles., etc., did not have power personally, but acted as 'conduits' through which God worked His power. It is in this sense that I say gifts did not cease. Yet, evidently, fewer are witnessed, and rarely. See relevant articles on this).

Verses 1-4

1.

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

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.

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.

4.

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

A short while after Jesus first appeared to the disciples, they went back to their previous jobs,

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not knowing what else to do. Jesus returned for the third time, and again manifested Himself to them. The disciples were fishing off the port of Tiberias, a city enlarged by Herod Antipas, mid-way up the western shore of Lake Galilee.

Peter was with 'doubting' Thomas, and Nathanael (possibly Bartholomew) of Cana. Also with him were the sons of Zebedee (James the Great and John). Two unnamed disciples were with them, too, thus making seven in total.

Peter said he wanted to go fishing, and the other six decided to go with him, after dark, not far from the shore; some went in a smaller ship. Despite their best efforts, they caught nothing even though the Galilee was usually teeming with fish. Morning arose and Jesus stood on the shore. But, the disciples did not know who He was. This was either because they were too far away to see His face, or Jesus did not wish them to know Who He was for a short while, as He did on other occasions.

Verses 5-8

1.

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

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

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.

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Using what might appear to be an odd appellation, 'Children', Jesus called to them. In this title, Jesus was referring to their very young faith. He asked if they had caught any fish, and they answered 'No'. Jesus advised them to cast their net on the right side of the ship, which they did. Suddenly and instantly, their net was so full of fish they could not pull it back into the vessel. There were two kinds of net, one with small mesh for fish such as sardines, and the other with larger mesh, for larger fish. Peter was using a large-mesh net, to catch large fish. We know this by the number of fish caught.

When he saw this, John said to Peter "It is the Lord"! Peter immediately put his tunic back on, for he had stripped off his garments in readiness for diving into the water – he put them back on out of respect for the Master. He swam to the net to try to drag it back to the ship. To do this he had to dive to the bottom, pick up the heavier rope, and pull it upwards to the surface, thus making the net into a scoop. He was helped by the disciples in their smaller ship, and between them they brought the catch to shore, about 300 feet away.

Verses 9-12

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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.

4.

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

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By the time they got back to shore, Jesus had built a coal fire, with fish already placed over the flames, and bread close by... something resembling a modern barbeque! Jesus did not just look after their souls! Jesus told the disciples to bring the huge catch onto the beach. We are not told what the fish were, but they must have been large to be so heavy that a mere 153 fish were hard to land. There were up to 24 types of fish, and some of them were peculiar to the Lake itself. The fish, though large, did not break the net, thanks to Jesus' miracle. (Note: The miracle was not so much the fish, because the lake was full of them. The miracle was that they were not found until the net went over a specified side of the ship, at Jesus' specific command, which took effect instantly).

Jesus said "Come, dine", and the disciples obeyed. By now, they did not need to ask Who He was – it was obvious. How excited they must have been! Modern Christians often do not recognise when God acts in their lives. This is because their anxieties over life tend to hide the presence of God, so they do not see Him nor do they obey. (By 'they' I also mean 'we' and 'I').

Verses 13-17

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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

4.

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.

5.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved

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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.

Jesus approached the disciples and gave them bread and fish, to feed them after a long night's fishing. Verse 14 tells us this was only the third time Jesus appeared before them. When the men had eaten their fill, Jesus turned to Peter and asked the same question, three times. Being God, Jesus did not waste His words. If He asks a question, then it must be loaded with meaning.

Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him more than he loved the other disciples. He replied 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you'. 'Then go and feed my lambs' replied Jesus. The 'lambs' were all who believed and needed spiritual sustenance. A second time Jesus turned to Peter and asked "lovest thou me?" Peter must have been mystified by a repeat question, and replied that yes, he did love Him. Jesus told him, again, to feed His sheep, those believers (of His fold).

But, he felt disturbed (grieved) when Jesus repeated the question a third time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" This time, Peter said "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Again, Jesus said "Feed my sheep".

There had to be a very deep reason for Jesus to repeat the same question. Note that it was Peter who denied Christ three times on the morning of Jesus' capture. On the first occasion, Jesus used the word *agapaō* (love). Peter used the word *phileō* in reply, a word that denotes fondness. The second time, Jesus again used the verb

agapaō

a verb that carries the idea of fondness or to love dearly. Peter again responded with

phileō,

which represents a tender affection.

Jesus was making sure that Peter understood his own response to Him. In the first two questions Jesus wanted to know if Peter valued and esteemed Him enough to act on His behalf unselfishly. In the third question Jesus used *phileō* instead of *agapaō*. Peter had to be very sure of his commitment to Christ and the Gospel! This time Peter's 'love' was the same as that in Jesus' question.

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Verses 18-22

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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?

4.

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

5.

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

Jesus had a prophetic angle to His questions, for Peter's commitment to the Lord would lead to his own death. Jesus said that as a younger man Peter just dressed and did whatever he wished. But, when he got older, he would "stretch forth (his) hands", and he would be dressed (bound) by a stranger who would take him to a place he did not wish to go. Verse 29 says that these words signified by what death Peter would die, a death that would glorify God. Jesus then simply said "Follow me", meaning, to be His constant disciple. Do these words specifically tell us Peter would also be crucified (the popular belief) as an old man? Maybe. It is very possible. The main theme was not Peter's death, but his reliability as a pastoral teacher.

As Peter turned away with Jesus, he saw John following, too. Peter asked who it was that

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betrayed Jesus. (We are not told Jesus answered this question). He also asked a second question: "What shall this man do?" referring to John. Jesus gave a mild rebuke: 'What business is it of yours? What if he is still alive by the time I return (rhetorical); it is not your concern. All yo
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must do is follow me!' Many Christians think that other Christians must follow THEIR example in life, whereas Jesus calls each of us to a different part of the vineyard to do His bidding (Sadly, few do ANY work for Christ)! If they do not follow their peers, they are rejected or shunned! Such is Christian pride. Christ calls each of us to his own ministry (that goes for
every
Christian, not just the 'minister').

Verses 23-25

1.

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?

2.

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

3.

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.

Believers in that day now thought John would never die. But, Jesus did not say this! It was a mistaken view based on an inaccurate use of Jesus' words. We should not be surprised, for Christians today continually believe in errors and do not use genuine study methods. Jesus was merely making a rhetorical point to Peter, that whatever Jesus decided to do was not Peter's concern.

And it was John himself who corrected the erroneous view: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things..." and because he was with Jesus, we can be sure that what he wrote was true. Too many Christians today make statements and spread beliefs, based not on their own

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personal relationship with God, but on guesswork, invented theology, and the exploits of others (usually in previous centuries!).

John tells us that what he has written is but a drop in the ocean! If he were to write down everything that Jesus said and did, the books would fill the world and yet still not contain enough examples! Even so, God calls men and women to Himself, providing sufficient material on which to base their personally-experienced conclusions. God gave us principles to work from, plus a few examples. The rest we can work out , because we have the Holy Spirit within.

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